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# LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

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MARCH 1902.

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## *The Disentanglers.<sup>1</sup>*

V.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE OFFICE SCREEN.

IT is not to be supposed that all the enterprises of the Company of Disentanglers were fortunate. Nobody can command Success, though, on the other hand, a number of persons, civil and military, are able to keep her at a distance with surprising uniformity. There was one class of business which Merton soon learned to renounce in despair, just as some sorts of maladies defy our medical science.

'It is curious, and not very creditable to our chemists,' Merton said, 'that love philtres were once as common as seidlitz powders, while now we have lost that secret. The wrong persons might drink love philtres, as in the case of Tristram and Iseult. Or an unskilled rural practitioner might send out the wrong drug, as in the instance of Lucretius, who went mad in consequence.'

'Perhaps,' remarked Logan, 'the chemist was voting at the Comitia, and it was his boy who made a mistake about the mixture.'

'Very probably, but as a rule, the love philtres *worked*. Now, with all our boasted progress, the secret is totally lost. Nothing but a love philtre would be of any use in some cases. There is Lord Methusalem, eighty if he is a day.'

'Methusalem has been unco "wastefu' in wives"!' said Logan.

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'His family have been consulting me—the women in tears. He *will* marry his grandchildren's German governess, and there is nothing to be done. In such cases nothing is ever to be done. You can easily distract an aged man's volatile affections, and attach them to a new charmer. But she is just as ineligible as the first; marry he *will*, always a young woman. Now if a respectable virgin or widow of, say, fifty, could hand him a love philtre, and gain his heart, appearances would, more or less, be saved. But, short of philtres, there is nothing to be done. We turn away a great deal of business of that sort.'

The Society of Disentanglers, then, reluctantly abandoned dealings in this class of affairs.

In another distressing business, Merton, as a patriot, was obliged to abandon an attractive enterprise. The Marquis of Seakail was serving his country as a volunteer, and had been mentioned in despatches. But, to the misery of his family, he had entangled himself, before his departure, with a young lady who taught in a high school for girls. Her character was unimpeachable, her person graceful, still, as her father was a butcher, the duke and duchess were reluctant to assent to the union. They consulted Merton, and assured him that they would not flinch from expense. A great idea flashed across Merton's mind. He might send out a stalwart band of Disentanglers, who, disguised as the enemy, might capture Seakail, and carry him off prisoner to some retreat where the fairest of his female staff (of course with a suitable chaperon) would await him in the character of a daughter of the hostile race. The result would probably be to detach Seakail's heart from his love in England. But on reflection, Merton felt that the scheme was unworthy of a patriot.

Other painful cases occurred. One lady, a mother, of resolute character, consulted Merton on the case of her son. He was betrothed to an excitable girl, a neighbour in the country, who wrote long literary letters about Mr. George Meredith's novels, and (when abroad) was a perfect Baedeker, or Murray, or Mr. Augustus Hare: instructing through correspondence. So the matron complained, but this was not the worst of it. There was an unhappy family history, of a kind infinitely more common in fiction than in real life. To be explicit, even according to the ideas of the most abject barbarians, the young people, unwittingly, were too near akin for matrimony.

'There is nothing for it but to tell both of them the

truth,' said Merton. 'This is not a case in which we can be concerned.'

The resolute matron did not take his counsel. The man was told, not the girl, who died in painful circumstances, still writing. Her letters were later given to the world, though obviously not intended for publication, and only calculated to waken unavailing grief among the sentimental, and to make the judicious tired. There was, however, a case in which Merton may be said to have succeeded by a happy accident. Two visitors, ladies, were ushered into his consulting room; they were announced as Miss Baddeley and Miss Crofton.

Miss Baddeley was attired in black, wore a thick veil, and trembled a good deal. Miss Crofton, whose dress was a combination of untoward but decisive hues, and whose hat was enormous and flamboyant, appeared to be the other young lady's *confidante*, and conducted the business of the interview.

'My dear friend, Miss Baddeley,' she began, when Miss Baddeley took her hand, and held it, as if for protection and sympathy. 'My dear friend,' repeated Miss Crofton, 'has asked me to accompany her, and state her case. She is too highly strung to speak for herself.'

Miss Baddeley wrung Miss Crofton's hand, and visibly quivered.

Merton assumed an air of sympathy. 'The situation is grave?' he asked.

'My friend,' said Miss Crofton, thoroughly enjoying herself, 'is the victim of passionate and unavailing remorse, are you not, Julia?'

Julia nodded.

'Deeply as I sympathise,' said Merton, 'it appears to me that I am scarcely the person to consult. A mother now——'

'Julia has none.'

'Or a father or sister?'

'But for me, Julia is alone in the world.'

'Then,' said Merton, 'there are many periodicals especially intended for ladies. There is *The Woman of the World*, *The Girl's Guardian Angel*, *Fashion and Passion*, and so on. The Editors, in their columns, reply to questions in cases of conscience. I have myself read the replies to *Correspondents*, and would especially recommend those published in a serial conducted by Miss Annie Swan.'

Miss Crofton shook her head.

'Miss Baddeley's social position is not that of the people who are answered in periodicals.'

'Then why does she not consult some discreet and learned person, her spiritual director? Remorse (entirely due, no doubt, to a conscience too delicately sensitive) is not in our line of affairs. We only advise in cases of undesirable matrimonial engagements.'

'So we are aware,' said Miss Crofton. 'Dear Julia *is* engaged, or rather entangled, in—how many cases, dear?'

Julia shook her head and sobbed behind her veil.

'Is it one, Julia—nod when I come to the exact number—two? three? four?'

At the word 'four' Julia nodded assent.

Merton very much wished that Julia would raise her veil. Her figure was excellent, and with so many sins of this kind on her remorseful head, her face, Merton thought, must be worth seeing. The case was new. As a rule, clients wanted to disentangle their friends and relations. *This* client wanted to disentangle herself.

'This case,' said Merton, 'will be difficult to conduct, and the expenses would be considerable. I can hardly advise you to incur them. Our ordinary method is to throw in the way of one or other of the engaged, or entangled persons, some one who is likely to distract their affections; of course,' he added, 'to a more eligible object. How can I hope to find an object more eligible, Miss Crofton, than I must conceive your interesting friend to be?'

Miss Crofton caressingly raised Julia's veil. Before the victim of remorse could bury her face in her hands, Merton had time to see that it was a very pretty one. Julia was dark, pale, with 'eyes like billiard balls' (as a celebrated amateur once remarked), with a beautiful mouth, but with a somewhat wildly enthusiastic expression.

'How can I hope?' Merton went on, 'to find a worthier and more attractive object? Nay, how can I expect to secure the services not of one, but of *four*—'

'Three would do, Mr. Graham,' explained Miss Crofton. 'Is it not so, Julia dearest?'

Julia again nodded assent, and a sob came from behind the veil, which she had resumed.

'Even three,' said Merton, gallantly struggling with a strong inclination to laugh, 'present difficulties. I do not speak the idle

language of compliment, Miss Crofton, when I say that our staff would be overtaxed by the exigencies of this case. The expense also, even of three——'

'Expense is no object,' said Miss Crofton.

'But would it not, though I seem to speak against my own interests, be the wisest, most honourable, and infinitely the least costly course, for Miss Baddeley openly to inform her suitors, three out of the four at least, of the actual posture of affairs? I have already suggested that, as the lady takes the matter so seriously to heart, she should consult her director, or, if of the Anglican or other Protestant denomination, her clergyman, who I am sure will agree with me.'

Miss Crofton shook her head. 'Julia is unattached,' she said.

'I had gathered that to one of the four Miss Baddeley was—not indifferent,' said Merton.

'I meant,' said Miss Crofton severely, 'that Miss Baddeley is a Christian unattached. My friend is sensitive, passionate, and deeply religious, but not a member of any recognised denomination. The clergy——'

'They never leave one alone,' said Julia in a musical voice. It was the first time that she had spoken. 'Besides——' she added, and paused.

'Besides, dear Julia *is*—entangled with a young clergyman whom, almost in despair, she consulted on her case—at a picnic,' said Miss Crofton, adding, 'he is prepared to seek a martyr's fate, but he insists that she must accompany him.'

'How unreasonable!' murmured Merton, who felt that this recalcitrant clergyman was probably not the favourite out of the field of four.

'That is what *I* say,' remarked Miss Crofton. 'It is unreasonable to expect Julia to accompany him when she has so much work to undertake in the home field. But that is the way with all of them.'

'All of them!' exclaimed Merton. 'Are all the devoted young men under vows to seek the crown of martyrdom? Does your friend act as recruiting sergeant, if you will pardon the phrase, for the noble army of martyrs?'

'Three of them have made the most solemn promises.'

'And the fourth?'

'He is not in Holy Orders.'

'Am I to understand that all the three admirers about whom Miss Baddeley suffers remorse are clerics?'

'Yes. Julia has a wonderful attraction for the Church,' said Miss Crofton, 'and that is what causes her difficulties. She *can't* write to *them*, or communicate to *them* in personal interviews (as you advised), that her heart is no longer——'

'Theirs,' said Merton. 'But why are the clergy more privileged than the laity? I have heard of such things being broken to laymen. Indeed, it has occurred to many of us, and we yet live.'

'I have urged the same facts on Julia myself,' said Miss Crofton. 'Indeed, I *know*, by personal experience, that what you say of the laity is true. They do not break their hearts when disappointed. But Julia replies that for her to act as you and I would advise might be to shatter the young clergymen's ideals.'

'To shatter the ideals of three young men in Holy Orders!' said Merton.

'Yes, for Julia *is* their ideal—Julia and Duty,' said Miss Crofton, as if she were naming a firm. 'She lives only,' here Julia twisted the hand of Miss Crofton, 'she lives only to do good. Her fortune, entirely under her own control, enables her to do a great deal of good.'

Merton began to understand that the charms of Julia were not entirely confined to her *beaux yeux*.

'She is a true philanthropist. Why, she rescued *me* from the snares and temptations of the stage,' said Miss Crofton.

'Oh, *now* I understand,' said Merton; 'I knew that your face and voice were familiar to me. Did you not act in a revival of *The Country Wife*?——'

'Hush,' said Miss Crofton.

'And Lady Teazle at an amateur performance in the Canterbury week?'

'These are days of which I do not desire to be reminded,' said Miss Crofton. 'I was trying to explain to you that Julia lives to do good, and has a heart of gold. No, my dear, Mr. Graham will much misconceive you unless you let me explain everything.' This remark was in reply to the agitated gestures of Julia. 'Thrown much among the younger clergy in the exercise of her benevolence, Julia naturally awakens in them emotions not wholly brotherly. Her sympathetic nature carries her off her feet, and she sometimes says "Yes," out of mere goodness of

heart, when it would be wiser for her to say "No"; don't you, Julia?

Merton was reminded of one of M. Paul Bourget's amiable married heroines, who erred out of sheer goodness of heart, but he only signified his intelligence and sympathy.

'Then poor Julia,' Miss Crofton went on hurriedly, 'finds that she has misunderstood her heart. Recently, ever since she met Captain Lestrangle—of the Guards——'

'The fourth?' asked Merton.

Miss Crofton nodded. 'She has felt more and more certain that she *had* misread her heart. But on each occasion she *has* felt this—after meeting the—well, the next one.'

'I see the awkwardness,' murmured Merton.

'And then Remorse has set in, with all her horrors. Julia has wept, oh! for nights, on my shoulder.'

'Happy shoulder,' murmured Merton.

'And so, as she *dare* not shatter their ideals, and perhaps cause them to plunge into excesses, moral or doctrinal, this is what she has done. She has said to each, that what the Church, any Church, needs is martyrs, and that if they will go to benighted lands, where the crown of martyrdom may still be won, *then*, if they return safe in five years, then she—will think of naming a day. You will easily see the attractions of this plan for Julia, Mr. Graham. No ideals were shattered, the young men being unaware of the circumstances. They *might* forget her——'

'Impossible,' cried Merton.

'They might forget her, or, perhaps they——' Miss Crofton hesitated.

'Perhaps they might never——?' asked Merton.

'Yes,' said Miss Crofton; 'perhaps they might *not*. That would be all to the good for the Church; no ideals would be shattered—the reverse—and dear Julia would——'

'Cherish their pious memories,' said Merton.

'I see that you understand me,' said Miss Crofton.

Merton did understand, and he was reminded of the wicked lady who, when tired of her lovers, had them put into a sack, and dropped into the Seine.

'But,' he asked, 'has this ingenious system failed to work? I should suppose that each young man, on distant and on deadly shores, was far from causing inconvenience.'

'The defect of the system,' said Miss Crofton, 'is that none of them has gone, or seems in a hurry to go. The first—that was Mr. Bathe, Julia?'

Julia nodded.

'Mr. Bathe was to have gone to Turkey during the Armenian atrocities, and to have *forced* England to intervene by taking the Armenian side and getting massacred. Julia was intensely interested in the Armenians. But Mr. Bathe first said that he must lead Julia to the altar before he went; and then the massacres fell off, and he remains at Cheltenham, and is very tiresome. And then there is Mr. Clancy, *he* was to go out to China, and denounce the gods of the heathen Chinese in the public streets. But *he* insisted that Julia should first be his, and he is at Leamington, and not a step has he taken to convert the Boxers.'

Merton knew the name of Clancy. Clancy had been his fag at school, and Merton thought it extremely improbable that the martyr's crown would ever adorn his brow.

'Then—and this is the last of them, of the clergy, at least—Mr. Brooke: he was to visit the New Hebrides, where the natives are cannibals, and utterly unawakened. He is as bad as the others. He won't go alone. Now, Julia is obliged to correspond with all of them in affectionate terms (she keeps well out of their way), and this course of what she feels to be duplicity is preying terribly on her conscience.'

Here Julia sobbed hysterically.

'She is afraid, too, that by some accident, though none of them know each other, they may become aware of the state of affairs, or Captain Lestrangle, to whom she is passionately attached, may find it out, and then, not only may their ideals be wrecked, but——

'Yes, I see,' said Merton; 'it is awkward, very.'

The interview, an early one, had lasted for some time. Merton felt that the hour of luncheon had arrived, and, after luncheon, it had been his intention to go up to the University match. He also knew, from various sounds, that clients were waiting in the ante-chamber. At this moment the door opened, and the office boy, entering, laid three cards before him.

'The gentlemen asked when you could see them, sir. They have been waiting some time. They say that their appointment was at one o'clock, and they wish to go back to Lord's.'

'So do I,' thought Merton sadly. He looked at the cards, repressed a whistle, and handed them silently to Miss Crofton, bidding the boy go, and return in three minutes.

Miss Crofton uttered a little shriek, and pressed the cards on

Julia's attention. Raising her veil, Julia scanned them, wrung her hands, and displayed symptoms of a tendency to faint. The cards bore the names of the Rev. Mr. Bathe, the Rev. Mr. Brooke, and the Rev. Mr. Clancy.

'What is to be done?' asked Miss Crofton in a whisper. 'Can't you send them away?'

'Impossible,' said Merton firmly.

'If we go out they will know me, and suspect Julia.'

Miss Crofton looked round the room with eyes of desperate scrutiny. They at once fell on a large old-fashioned screen, covered with engravings, which Merton had picked up for the sake of two or three old mezzotints, barbarously pasted on to this article of furniture by some ignorant owner.

'Saved! we are saved! Hist, Julia, hither!' said Miss Crofton in a stage whisper. And while Merton murmured 'Highly unprofessional,' the skirts of the two ladies vanished behind the screen.

Miss Crofton had not played Lady Teazle for nothing.

'Ask the gentlemen to come in,' said Merton, when the boy returned.

They entered: three fair young curates, nervous and inclined to giggle. Shades of difference of ecclesiastical opinion declared themselves in their hats, costume, and jewellery.

'Be seated, gentlemen,' said Merton, and they sat down on three chairs, in identical attitudes.

'We hope,' said the man on the left, 'that we are not here inconveniently. We would have waited, but, you see, we have all come up for the match.'

'How is it going?' asked Merton anxiously.

'Cambridge four wickets down for 115, but——' and the young man stared, 'it must be, it is Pussy Merton!'

'And you, Clancy Minor, why are you not converting the Heathen Chinese? You deserve a death of torture.'

'Goodness! How do you know that?' asked Clancy.

'I know many things,' answered Merton. 'I am not sure which of you is Mr. Bathe.'

Clancy presented Mr. Bathe, a florid young evangelist, who blushed.

'Armenia is still suffering, Mr. Bathe; and Mr. Brooke,' said Merton, detecting him by the Method of Residues, 'the oven is still hot in the New Hebrides. What have you got to say for yourselves?'

The curates shifted nervously on their chairs.

'We see, Merton,' said Clancy, 'that you know a good deal which we did not know ourselves till lately. In fact, we did not know each other till the Church Congress at Leamington. Then the other men came to tea at my rooms, and saw——'

'A portrait of a lady; each of you possessed a similar portrait,' said Merton.

'How the dev—I mean, how do you know *that*?'

'By a simple deductive process,' said Merton. 'There were also letters,' he said. Here a gurgle from behind the screen was audible to Merton.

'We did not read each other's letters,' said Clancy, blushing.

'Of course not,' said Merton.

'But the handwriting on the envelopes was identical,' Clancy went on.

'Well, and what can our Society do for you?'

'Why, we saw your advertisements, never guessed they were *yours*, of course, Pussy, and—none of us is a man of the world'——

'I congratulate you,' said Merton.

'So we thought we had better take advice: it seemed rather a lark, too, don't you know? The fact is—you appear to have divined it somehow—we find that we are all engaged to the same lady. We can't fight, and we can't all marry her.'

'In Thibet it might be practicable: martyrdom might also be secured there,' said Merton.

'Martyrdom is not good enough,' said Clancy.

'Not half,' said Bathe.

'A man has his duties in his own country,' said Brooke.

'May I ask whether in fact your sorrows at this discovery have been intense?' asked Merton.

'I was a good deal cut up at first,' said Clancy, 'I being the latest recruit. Bathe had practically given up hope, and had seen someone else.' Mr. Bathe drooped his head, and blushed. 'Brooke laughed. Indeed, we *all* laughed, though we felt rather foolish. But what are we to do? Should we write her a Round Robin? Bathe says he ought to be the man, because he was first man in, and I say *I* ought to be the man, because I am not out.'

'I would not build much on *that*,' said Merton, and he was sure that he heard a rustle behind the screen, and a slight struggle. Julia was trying to emerge, restrained by Miss Crofton.

'I knew,' said Clancy, 'that there was *something*—that there

were other fellows. But that I learned, more or less, under the seal of confession, so to speak.'

'At a picnic,' said Merton.

At this moment the screen fell with a crash, and Julia emerged, her eyes blazing, while Miss Crofton followed, her hat somewhat crushed by the falling screen. The three young men in Holy Orders, all of them desirable young men, rose to their feet, trembling visibly.

'Apostates!' cried Julia, who had by far the best of the dramatic situation and pressed her advantage. 'Recreants! was it for such as *you* that I pointed to the crown of martyrdom? Was it for *your* shattered ideals that I have wept many a night on Serena's faithful breast?' She pointed to Miss Crofton, who enfolded her in an embrace. 'You!' Julia went on, aiming at them the finger of conviction. 'I am but a woman, weak I may have been, wavering I may have been, but I took you for men! I chose you to dare, perhaps to perish, for a Cause. But now, triflers that you are, boys, mere boys, back with you to your silly games, back to the thoughtless throng. I have done.'

Julia, attended by Miss Crofton, swept from the chamber, under her indignation (which was quite as real as any of her other emotions) the happiest woman in London. She had no more occasion for remorse, no ideals had she sensibly injured. Her entanglements were disentangled. She inhaled the fragrance of orange blossoms from afar, and heard the marriage music in the chapel of the Guards. Meanwhile the three curates and Merton felt as if they had been whipped.

'Trust a woman to have the best of it,' muttered Merton admiringly. 'And now, Clancy, may I offer a hasty luncheon to you and your friends before we go to Lord's? Your business has been rather rapidly despatched.'

The conversation at luncheon turned exclusively on cricket.

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## VI.

### A LOVER IN COCKY.

It cannot be said that the bearers of the noblest names in the land flocked at first to the offices of Messrs. Gray and Graham. In fact the reverse in the beginning, was the case. Members even of the more learned professions held aloof: indeed, barristers

and physicians never became eager clients. On the other hand, Messrs. Gray and Graham received many letters in such handwritings, such grammar, and such orthography, that they burned them without replying. A common sort of case was that of the young farmer whose widowed mother had set her heart on marriage with 'a bonny labouring boy,' a ploughman.

'We can do nothing with these people,' Merton remarked. 'We can't send down a young and elegant friend of ours to distract the affections of an elderly female agriculturist. The bonny labouring boy would punch the fashionable head; or, at all events, would prove much more attractive to the widow than our agent.'

'Then there are the members of the Hebrew community. They hate mixed marriages, and quite right too. I deeply sympathise. But if Leah has let her affections loose on young Timmins, an Anglo-Saxon and a Christian, what can we do? How stop the *mésalliance*? We have not, in our little regiment, one fair Hebrew boy to smile away her maiden blame among the Hebrew mothers of Maida Vale, and to cut out Timmins. And of course it is as bad with the men. If young Isaacs wants to marry Miss Julia Timmins, I have no Rebecca to slip at him. The Semitic demand, though large and perhaps lucrative, cannot be met out of a purely Aryan supply.'

Business was pretty slack, and so Merton rather rejoiced over the application of a Mrs. Nicholson, from The Laburnums, Walton-on-Dove, Derbyshire. Mrs. Nicholson's name was not in Burke's 'Landed Gentry,' and The Laburnums could hardly be estimated as one of the stately homes of England. Still, the lady was granted an interview. She was what the Scots call 'a buddy;' that is, she was large, round, attired in black, between two ages, and not easily to be distinguished, by an unobservant eye, from buddies as a class. After greetings, and when enthroned in the client's chair, Mrs. Nicholson stated her case with simplicity and directness.

'It is my ward,' she said, 'Barbara Monypenny. I must tell you that she was left in my charge till she is twenty-six. I and her lawyers make her an allowance out of her property, which she is to get when she marries with my consent, at whatever age.'

'May I ask how old the lady is at present?' said Merton.

'She is twenty-two.'

'Your kindness in taking charge of her is not—— not wholly uncompensated?'

'No; an allowance is made to me out of the estate.'

'An allowance which ends on her marriage, if she marries with your consent?'

'Yes, it ends then. Her uncle trusted me a deal more than he trusted Barbara. She was strange from a child. Fond of the men,' as if that were an unusual and unbecoming form of philanthropy.

'I see, and she being an heiress, the testator was anxious to protect her youth and innocence?'

Mrs. Nicholson merely sniffed, but the sniff was affirmative, though sarcastic.

'Her property, I suppose, is considerable? I do not ask from impertinent curiosity, nor for exact figures. But, as a question of business, may we call the fortune considerable?'

'Most people do. It runs into six figures.'

Merton, who had no mathematical head, scribbled on a piece of paper. The result of his calculations (which I, not without some fever of the brow, have personally verified) proved that 'six figures' might be anything between 100,000*l.* and 999,999*l.* 19*s.* 11½*d.*

'Certainly it is very considerable,' Merton said, after a few minutes passed in arithmetical calculation. 'Am I too curious if I ask what is the source of this opulence?'

"'Wilton's Panmedicon, or Heal All,' a patent medicine. He sold the patent and retired.'

Merton shuddered.

'It would be Pammedicum if it could be anything,' he thought, 'but it can't, linguistically speaking.'

'Invaluable as a subterfuge,' said Mrs. Nicholson, obviously with an indistinct recollection of the advertisement and of the properties of the drug.

Merton construed the word as 'febrifuge,' silently, and asked: 'Have you taken the young lady much into society; has she had many opportunities of making a choice? You are dissatisfied with the choice, I understand, which she has made?'

'I don't let her see anybody if I can help it. Fire and powder are better kept apart, and she is powder, a minx! Only a fisher or two comes to the Perch, that's the inn at Walton-on-Dove, and *they* are mostly old gentlemen, pottering with their rods and things. If a young man comes to the inn, I take care to trapsee after her through the nasty damp meadows.'

'Is the young lady an angler?'

'She is—most unwomanly I call it.'

Merton's idea of the young lady rose many degrees. 'You said the young lady was "strange from a child, very strange. Fond of the men." Happily for our sex, and for the world, it is not so very strange or unusual to take pity on us.'

'She has always been queer.'

'You do not hint at any cerebral disequilibrium?' asked Merton.

'Would you mind saying that again?' asked Mrs. Nicholson.

'I meant nothing wrong *here*?' Merton said, laying his finger on his brow.

'No, not so bad as that,' said Mrs. Nicholson; 'but just queer. Uncommon. Tells odd stories about—nonsense. She is wearing with her dreams. She reads books on, I don't know how to call it—Tipsycake, Tipsicakical Search. Histories, I call it.'

'Yes, I understand,' said Merton; 'Psychical Research.'

'That's it, and Hyptonism,' said Mrs. Nicholson, as many ladies do.

'Ah, Hyptonism, so called from its founder, Hypton, the eminent Anglo-French chemist; he was burned at Rome, one of the latest victims of the Inquisition,' said Merton.

'I don't hold with Popery, sir, but it served *him* right.'

'That is all the queerness then!'

'That and general discontentedness.'

'Girls will be girls,' said Merton; 'she wants society.'

'Want must be her master then,' said Mrs. Nicholson stolidly.

'But about the man of her choice, have you anything against him?'

'No, but nothing *for* him: I never even saw him.'

'Then where did Miss Monypenny make his acquaintance?'

Well, like a fool, I let her go to pass Christmas with some distant cousins of my own, who should have known better. They stupidly took her to a dance, at Tutbury, and there she met him: just that once.'

'And they became engaged on so short an acquaintance?'

'Not exactly that. She was not engaged when she came home, and did not seem to mean to be. She did talk of him a lot. He had got round her finely: told her that he was going out to

the war, and that they were sister spirits. He had dreamed of meeting her, he said, and that was why he came to the ball, for he did not dance. He said he believed they had met in a state of pre—something; meaning, if you understand me, before they were born, which could not be the case: she not being a twin, still less *his* twin.'

'That would be the only way of accounting for it, certainly,' said Merton. 'But what followed? Did they correspond?'

'He wrote to her, but she showed me the letter, and put it in the fire unopened. He had written his name, Marmaduke Ingles, on a corner of the envelope.'

'So far her conduct seems correct, even austere,' said Merton.

'It was at first, but then he wrote from South Africa, where he volunteered as a doctor. He was a doctor at Tutbury.'

'She opened that letter?'

'Yes, and showed it to me. He kept on with his nonsense, asking her never to forget him, and sending his photograph in cocky.'

'Pardon!' said Merton.

'In uniform. And if he fell, she would see his ghost, in cocky, crossing her room, he said. In fact he knew how to get round the foolish girl. I believe he went out there just to make himself interesting.'

'Did you try to find out what sort of character he had at home?'

'Yes, there was no harm in it, only he had no business to speak of, everybody goes to Dr. Younghusband.'

'Then, really, if he is an honest young man, as he seems to be a patriotic fellow, are you certain that you are wise in objecting?'

'I *do* object,' said Mrs. Nicholson, and indeed her motives for refusing her consent were only too obvious.

'Are they quite definitely engaged?' asked Merton.

'Yes they are now, by letter, and she says she will wait for him till I die, or she is twenty-six, if I don't give my consent. He writes every mail, from places with outlandish names, in Africa. And she keeps looking in a glass ball, like the labourers' women, some of them; she's sunk as low as *that*; so superstitious; and sometimes she tells me that she sees what he is doing, and where he is; and now and then, when his letters come, she shows me bits of them, to prove she was right. But just as often she's

wrong; only she won't listen to *me*. She says it's Telly, Tellyopathy. I say it's flat nonsense.'

'I quite agree with you,' said Merton, with conviction. 'After all, though, honest, as far as you hear. . . .'

'Oh yes, honest enough, but that's all,' interrupted Mrs. Nicholson, with a hearty sneer.

'Though he bears a good character, from what you tell me he seems to be a very silly young man.'

'Silly Johnny to Silly Jenny,' put in Mrs. Nicholson.

'A pair with ideas so absurd could not possibly be happy,' Merton reasoned. 'Why don't you take her into the world, and show her life? With her fortune and with *you* to take her about, she would soon forget this egregiously foolish romance.'

'And me to have her snapped up by some whipper-snapper that calls himself a lord? Not me, Mr. Graham,' said Mrs. Nicholson. 'The money that her uncle made by the Panmedicon is not going to be spent on horses, and worse, if I can help it.'

'Then,' said Merton, 'all I can do for you is by our ordinary method—to throw some young man of worth and education in the way of your ward, and attempt to—divert her affections.'

'And have *him* carry her off under my very nose? Not much, Mr. Graham. Why where do *I* come in, in this pretty plan?'

'Do not suppose me to suggest anything so—detrimental to your interests, Mrs. Nicholson. Is your ward beautiful?'

'A toad!' said Mrs. Nicholson with emphasis.

'Very well. There is no danger. The gentleman of whom I speak is betrothed to one of the most beautiful girls in England. They are deeply attached, and their marriage is only deferred for prudential reasons.'

'I don't trust one of them,' said Mrs. Nicholson.

'Very well, Madam,' answered Merton severely; 'I have done all that experience can suggest. The gentleman of whom I speak has paid especial attention to the mental delusions under which your ward is labouring, and has been successful in removing them in some cases. But as you reject my suggestion—he rose, so did Mrs. Nicholson—'I have the honour of wishing you a pleasant journey back to Derbyshire.'

'A bullet may hit him,' said Mrs. Nicholson with much acerbity. 'That's my best hope.'

Then Merton bowed her out.

'The old woman will never let the girl marry anybody, except

some adventurer, who squares her by giving her the full value of her allowance out of the estate,' thought Merton, adding 'I wonder how much it is! Six figures is anything between a hundred thousand and a million.'

The man he had thought of sending down to divert Miss Monypenny's affections from the young doctor was Jephson, the History coach, at that hour waiting for a professorship to enable him to marry Miss Willoughby.

However, he dismissed Mrs. Nicholson and her ward from his mind. About a fortnight later Merton received a letter directed in an uneducated hand. 'Another of the agricultural classes,' he thought, but, looking at the close of the epistle, he saw the name of Eliza Nicholson. She wrote :

'Sir,—Barbara has been at her glass ball, and seen him being carried on board a ship. If she is right, and she is not always wrong, he is on his way home. Though I will never give my consent, this spells botheration for me. You can send down your young man that cures by teleopathy, a thing that has come up since my time. He can stay at the Perch, and take a fishing rod, then they are safe to meet. I trust him no more than the rest, but she may fall between two stools, if the doctor does come home.

'Your obedient servant,

'ELIZA NICHOLSON.'

'Merely to keep one's hand in,' thought Merton, 'in the present disappointing slackness of business, I'll try to see Jephson. I don't like or trust him. I don't think he is the man for Miss Willoughby. So, if he ousts the doctor, and catches the heiress, why "there was more lost at Shirramuir," as Logan says.'

Merton managed to go up to Oxford, and called on Jephson. He found him anxious about a good, quiet, cheap place for study.

'Do you fish?' asked Merton.

'When I get the chance,' said Jephson.

He was a dark, rather clumsy, but not unprepossessing young don, with a very slight squint.

'If you fish did you ever try the Perch—I mean an inn, not the fish of the same name—at Walton-on-Dove? A pretty quiet place, two miles of water, local history perhaps interesting. It is not very far from Tutbury, where Queen Mary was kept, I think.'

'It sounds well,' said Jephson; 'I'll write to the landlord and ask about terms.'

'You could not do better,' said Merton, and he took his leave.

'Now, am I,' thought Merton as he walked down the Broad, 'to put Jephson up to it? If I don't, of course I can't "reap the benefit of one single pin" for the Society: Jephson not being a member. But the money, anyhow, would come from that old harpy out of the girl's estate. *Olet!* I don't like the fragrance of that kind of cash. But if the girl really is plain, "a toad," nothing may happen. On the other hand, Jephson is sure to hear about her position from local gossip—that she is rich, and so on. Perhaps she is not so very plain. They are sure to meet, or Mrs. Nicholson will bring them together in her tactful way. She has not much time to lose if the girl's glass ball yarn is true, and it *may* be true by a fluke. Jephson is rather bitten by a taste for all that "teleopathy" business, as the old Malaprop calls it. On the whole, I shall say no more to him, but let him play the game, if he goes to Walton, off his own bat.'

Presently Merton received a note from Jephson dated 'The Perch, Walton-on-Dove.' Jephson expressed his gratitude; the place suited his purpose very well. He had taken a brace and a half of trout, 'bordering on two pounds' ('one and a quarter,' thought Merton). 'And, what won't interest *you*,' his letter said, 'I have run across a curiously interesting subject, what *you* would call *hysterical*. But what, after all, is *hysteria*?' &c., &c.

'*L'affaire est dans le sac!*' said Merton to himself. 'Jephson and Miss Monypenny have met!'

Weeks passed, and one day, on arriving at the office, Merton found Miss Willoughby there awaiting his arrival. She was the handsome Miss Willoughby, Jephson's betrothed, a learned young lady who lived but poorly by verifying references and making researches at the Record Office.

Merton at once had a surmise, nor was it mistaken. The usual greetings had scarcely passed, when the girl, with cheeks on fire and eyes aflame, said:

'Mr. Merton, do you remember a question, rather unconventional, which you put to me at the dinner party you and Mr. Logan gave at the restaurant?'

'I ought not to have said it,' said Merton, 'but then it was an unconventional gathering. I asked if you——'

'Your words were "Had I a spark of the devil in me?" Well, I have! Can I'——

'Turn it to any purpose? You can, Miss Willoughby, and I shall have the honour to lay the method before you, of course only for your consideration, and under seal of secrecy. Indeed, I was just about to write to you asking for an interview.'

Merton then laid the circumstances in which he wanted Miss Willoughby's aid before her, but these must be reserved for the present. She listened, was surprised, was clearly ready for more desperate adventures; she came into his views, and departed.

'Jephson *has* played the game off his own bat—and won it,' thought Merton to himself. 'What a very abject the fellow is! But, after all, I have disentangled Miss Willoughby; she was infinitely too good for the man, with his squint.'

As Merton indulged in these rather Pharisaical reflections Mrs. Nicholson was announced. Merton greeted her, and gave orders that no other client was to be admitted. He was himself rather nervous. Was Mrs. Nicholson in a rage? No, her eyes beamed friendly; geniality clothed her brow.

'He has squared her,' thought Merton.

Indeed, the lady had warmly grasped his hand with both of her own, which were imprisoned in tight new purple gloves, while her bonnet spoke of regardlessness of expense and recent prodigality. She fell back into the client's chair.

'Oh, sir,' she said, 'when first we met we did not part, or I did not—you were quite the gentleman—on the best of terms. But now, how can I speak of your wise advice, and how much don't I owe you?'

Merton answered very gravely: 'You do not owe me anything, Madam. Please understand that I took absolutely no professional steps in your affair.'

'What?' cried Mrs. Nicholson. 'You did not send down that blessed young man to the Perch?'

'I merely suggested that the inn might suit a person whom I knew, who was looking for country quarters. Your name never crossed my lips, nor a word about the business on which you did me the honour to consult me.'

'Then I owe you nothing?'

'Nothing at all.'

'Well, I do call this providential,' said Mrs. Nicholson with devout enthusiasm.

'You are not in my debt to the extent of a farthing, but if you think that I have accidentally been——'

'An instrument!' said Mrs. Nicholson.

'Well, an unconscious instrument, perhaps you can at least tell me why you think so. What has occurred?'

'You really don't know?'

'I only know that you are pleased, and that your anxieties seem to be relieved.'

'Why, he saved her from being burned, and the brave,' said Mrs. Nicholson, 'deserve the fair, not that *she* is a beauty.'

'Do tell me all that happened.'

'And tell you I can, for that precious young man took me into his confidence. First, when I heard that he had come to the Perch, I trampled about the damp river-side with Barbara, and sure enough they met, he being on the Perch's side of the fence, and Barbara's line being caught high up in a tree on ours, as often happens. Well, I asked him to come over the fence and help her to get her line clear, which he did very civilly, and then he showed her how to fish, and then I asked him to tea and left them alone a bit, and when I came back they were talking away about teleopathy, and her glass ball, and all that nonsense. And he seemed interested, but not to believe in it quite. I could not understand half their tipsycakical lingo. So of course they often met again at the river, and he often came to tea, and she seemed to take to him—she was always one for the men. And at last a very queer thing happened, and gave him his chance.

'It was a very hot day in July, and she fell asleep on a seat under a tree with her glass ball in her lap; she had been staring at it, I suppose. Anyway, she slept on, till the sun went round and shone full on the ball; and just as he, Mr. Jephson, that is, came into the gate, the glass ball began to act like a burning glass and her skirt began to smoke. Well, he waited a bit, I think, till the skirt blazed a little, and then he rushed up and threw his coat over her skirt, and put the fire out. And so he saved her from being a Molochaust, like you read about in the Bible.'

Merton mentally disengaged the word 'Molochaust' into 'Moloch' and 'holocaust.'

'And there she was, when I happened to come by, a-crying and carrying on, with her head on his shoulder.'

'A pleasing group, and so they were engaged on the spot?' asked Merton.

'Not she! She held off, and thanked her preserver; but she

would be true, she said, to her lover in cocky. But before that Mr. Jephson had taken me into his confidence.'

'And you made no objection to his winning your ward, if he could?'

'No, sir, I could trust that young man: I could trust him with Barbara.'

'His arguments,' said Merton, 'must have been very cogent?'

'He understood my situation if she married, and what I deserved,' said Mrs. Nicholson, growing rather uncomfortable, and fidgeting in the client's chair.

Merton, too, understood, and knew what the sympathetic arguments of Jephson must have been.

'And, after all,' Merton asked, 'the lover has prospered in his suit?'

'This was how he got round her. He said to me that night, in private: "Mrs. Nicholson," said he, "your niece is a very interesting historical subject. I am deeply anxious, apart from my own passion for her, to relieve her from a singular but not very uncommon delusion."

"Meaning her lover in cocky," I said.

"There is no lover in cocky," says he.

"No Dr. Ingles!" said I.

"Yes, there *is* a Dr. Ingles, but he is not her lover, and your niece never met him. I bicycled to Tutbury lately, and, after examining the scene of Queen Mary's captivity, I made a few inquiries. What I had always suspected proved to be true. Dr. Ingles was not present at that ball at the Bear at Tutbury."

'Well,' Mrs. Nicholson went on, 'you might have knocked me down with a feather! I had never asked my second cousins the question, not wanting them to guess about my affairs. But down I sat, and wrote to Maria, and got her answer. Barbara never saw Dr. Ingles! only heard the girls mention him, and his going to the war. And then, after that, by Mr. Jephson's advice, I went and gave Barbara my mind. She should marry Mr. Jephson, who saved her life, or be the laughing stock of the country. I showed her up to herself, with her glass ball, and her teleopathy, and her sham love-letters that she wrote herself, and all her humbug. She cried, and she fainted, and she carried on, but I went at her whenever she could listen to reason. So she said "Yes," and I am the happy woman.'

'And Mr. Jephson is to be congratulated on so sensible and veracious a bride,' said Merton.

'Oh, he says it is by no means an uncommon case, and that he has effected a complete cure, and they will be as happy as idiots,' said Mrs. Nicholson, as she rose to depart.

She left Merton pensive, and not disposed to over-rate human nature. 'But there can't be many fellows like Jephson,' he said. 'I wonder how much the six figures run to?' But that question was never answered to his satisfaction.

*(To be continued.)*

## *Canvassing in 1832.*

**M**Y first and last appearance in a public character dates from the memorable year of the Reform Bill. I was then a student of St. John's College, Cambridge—by courtesy designated a *Cambridge man*. A near relation was the popular candidate for the county of which I was a native, and though I cared nothing for politics, and knew less, I took a burning interest in his success, and when I was asked to meet at his house two country lawyers, his agents, I joyfully accepted the invitation. In those days lawyers, doctors, and professional men in general were not considered of sufficient standing in society to justify their admission as guests to the tables of the county aristocrats. Even the meek clergyman looked down on anyone connected, however remotely, with trade, earning his living in an honest way. Mr. Wills, the Radical attorney, and Mr. Fowler, his professional rival, were therefore a little fluttered at being bidden to dine with the 'Squire.' I sat next to Mr. Wills, a fat, red-faced, loud man. He was very silent at first, but under the influence of a glass or two of champagne, then a rare beverage even at the best tables, he waxed friendly and eloquent. 'Wine with you, Mr. Frank! Here, waiter—*waiter*,' to Mr. Stokes, the dignified butler, 'champagne to Mr. Frank. Why, sir, you must help us in our canvass; you are just the man for it, and there are lots of voters Fen-way who ought to be looked up. I have not had time, and, though I think they are generally friendly, it won't do to neglect them.'

I tried to excuse myself on the ground of youth and inexperience, but Mr. Wills overruled my objections. 'Nonsense! As I said, you are just the man for it. They know you, and will be flattered by your calling. I will make you out a list, and you must start first thing to-morrow morning. I can give you a hint or two—but, mind, *no bribery*. We must have none of that *now*.'

Accordingly, the next morning at seven o'clock found me on

my cob on my way to Clayton-in-the-Fen, the scene of my proposed canvass.

My first visit was to the parsonage, where I arrived as the family were sitting down to an early breakfast. I was hospitably received, though no doubt they were rather puzzled to guess why I came so early, or, like John Gilpin's friend, why I 'came at all.' I blushing explained myself, and proceeded to make a capital breakfast. The Rev. Seth Smith had been a Fellow and tutor at my College, St. John's, and I felt not a little nervous. A Don, though not in residence, is a 'fearful beast' to an undergraduate, and I realised the feelings of P. P., clerk of the parish, when he first uplifted the psalm in the presence of the worshipful Mr. Jones. But Mr. Smith soon put me at my ease. His talk was of college days; he asked me all sorts of questions as to the works and ways of the Dons his successors; where I 'kept'; had I a private tutor? when did I go up for my little-go? In fact, he made himself very pleasant, even emitting a small joke—now old, then new—about the Bridge of *Grunts*. Thinking it time to go to business, I ventured to ask if we might count upon his support at the ensuing election. His answer was a little uncertain at the time, but as we walked under the old yew trees which bounded his garden he said—to himself, as it were—'Well, the Squire is a good Churchman and a good landlord; the county might do worse than elect him.' Then, turning to me: 'By-the-by, as you know, Mr. Scratton is dead, and his widow does not mean to keep the farm—or perhaps Mr. Bedford won't let it to her. It is a big farm, 600 acres; there is a piece about 40 acres that runs up into my glebe, and would be a good addition to it. Do you think, now, that the Squire would let *me* have a lease of it?' I felt '*quite sure* that he would,' at which his reverence seemed pleased, and, shaking me warmly by the hand, we parted at the stable door. Thence I rode off to the 'Moat Farm,' some two miles distant, to visit Mr. Rogers, the tenant, generally known as 'Moat Rogers' to distinguish him from a neighbour of the same name who occupied a farm on the roadside leading to Slowton, and thence called Road Rogers.' I knew him very slightly, and felt, as I had done on my previous visit, a little nervous as I crossed the rickety old bridge, the only access from the mainland to the house, which was entirely surrounded by a deep, green, stagnant pond or moat, swarming with frogs, the banks honey-combed by rats. I was agreeably surprised by the warm reception I met with. 'Vote for the Squire! Yes, I will; and I'll tell you

why. I was a coachman before I became a farmer, and I often drove my master to dine both at his house and the Grange' (the residence of our opponent). 'The treatment we servants met with at the Squire's was just royal. Joints as they came from the table Mrs. King gave us, and tarts and other good things, with plenty of strong ale to wash them down. At the Grange we were just served with cold meat and a measured pint of beer each man. I have not forgot it, I tell you, and I'll give my vote for the Squire just to show I have not.' Much elated, I left the 'Moat' Farm, and proceeded to that of Mr. Walton, a sturdy, independent farmer of the old sort, who wore a smock-frock on week-days and drove to church on Sundays in a blue coat and a shay cart. He worked on the farm, his wife and daughter managed the dairy, made cheese, and looked after the pigs. I found him just getting out of his cart, and at once broached the object of my visit.

'Come in, sir; come in, and have a bit of pork-pie and a glass of ale, and we'll talk it over. I had a chat with Mr. Pashler, my banker, this morning about it.'

'Have you been to Slowton this morning already, Mr. Walton?'

'Indeed I have, and it seems I was a bit too early. When I got to Bank there was an old woman awashing the steps and a young man taking down the shutters. "Is Mr. Pashler within?" I asked. "No," said she, "and won't be for two hours yet." "But I must see him," said I, "on business." "Then you had better go down to his house," said she, "and see him in bed, for he is not out of it yet." So I went down town to a fine house near the river. A man was sweeping the drive, and I asked if Mr. Pashler was about yet. Well, he just rang the bell and a flunkey came out in his shirt sleeves. "I want to see Mr. Pashler," said I, "on very important business." "He's not out of his dressing-room yet," he says. "Then I'll go to his dressing-room," says I, "for my business is *very important*." (In those days country bankers were called upon—not unwillingly, for the security was good—to assist the farmers when rent day came round before the corn was threshed out, and I guessed that Mr. Walton's 'very important' business had had reference to some transaction of that nature.) 'The flunkey walked before me to a room on the first floor. He knocked, and when I entered I found Mr. Pashler abrushing his hair with *both* hands and *two* brushes—a thing I had never seen before. "What, Walton, my friend," says he, "what brings you here at this time of day?" "Business, sir," says I,

"but, Mr. Pashler, I hope you ain't ill." "I? no; never was better in my life." "Then is this the first time you are out of bed?" "It is," he says. "Then," said I, "if I had lain in bed till this time of day I'd never have got up for the little bit that's left." Well, we had a talk and did our business. Flunkey gave me some breakfast, and I come away. And now, Mr. Frank, you've come, I know, to ask me to vote for Squire. Well, I'd like to know what he means to do about the "Corn Laws." (I wondered what on earth the 'Corn Laws' were, and so discreetly held my tongue.) 'I heard a man down at Slowton ranting about doing away with them altogether, and then, he said, wheat would be half the price it is now. Think of wheat at 50s., or perhaps 40s. a quarter! The country would be ruined!' I cordially agreed, though I did not exactly see why; but Mr. Walton seemed pleased that I did so, and I left him with the conviction that he would vote for us.

My next visit entailed a ride of five miles into Slowton to interview Mr. Hensey—known to undergraduates as 'Bill Hensey'—a very important person. He was coachman on the old Slowton coach, and would be leaving on his return journey to London at three o'clock. Coachmen in those days were considered desirable acquisitions at wine and supper parties, both at Cambridge and Oxford, and—vulgar dogs as they were—their presence at such revels was eagerly sought after. I found Mr. Hensey at his dinner, with a joint of cold roast beef before him, flanked by a steaming dish of potatoes and a pot of ale. A large saucer of pickled onions was at his elbow, to which he repeatedly applied, sticking his fork into the yellow bulbs and cracking them between his jaws with infinite gusto. As I took my seat he finished his dinner by drinking from the saucer the vinegar in which the onions had floated. In so doing he remarked, somewhat superfluously, 'I'm werry fond of pickled onions!'

'Bill' was an old friend of mine. As a boy I travelled to and from school every half-year with him, and now I frequently shared the box-seat, being occasionally permitted to 'handle the ribbons' with a quiet team and on an easy stage. I at once opened my business by asking his vote and interest for the Squire at the ensuing election. My request was warmly granted. 'Yes, I'll vote for him, and I hope he'll get in. He's a gentleman, he is, and always travels *outside* along of me.'

Before we parted—we had some pleasant chat, Bill recounting

his experiences of sundry supper parties, both at Cambridge and Oxford, where he had been an honoured guest. His experience of Oxford collegiate society was quite recent, he having taken the place of the regular coachman on the 'Highflyer' during the temporary absence of 'Black Will.' I asked him which he preferred, Cambridge or Oxford society. He said there was little to choose, both were tip-top, but to his mind the Oxford gent was the more *polished* of the two. 'When I sup with Mr. Don, at St. John's, he will call out, hospitable-like, "Bill, you beggar, floor your lush!" When I sup with an Oxford gent, he says, "Mr. William Hensey, *I looks towards you.*"'

Leaving Hensey, I cantered back to visit Mr. Ball, a large farmer and small landowner, a parishioner of my friend the Rev. Seth Smith. He was a fine specimen of the now almost extinct class of yeomen. Besides his farm, he held land of his own, hunted once a week, and sold his hunter at a good price when he had the opportunity. He bred, too, some cart-horses, which went up to London and fetched a deal of money from the great London brewers. I found him, with his buxom wife and two daughters, just sitting down to a very substantial dinner, at which, in response to a most cordial invitation, I speedily found myself seated, betwixt Mrs. Ball and Miss Hannah, the elder girl, a blonde, with bright eyes and a profusion of chestnut ringlets. After some commonplace remarks about the weather and the state of the roads, Mr. Ball plunged into the object of my visit, the obtaining of his and his son's votes at the ensuing election. On the strength of a glass or two of excellent ale I became eloquent on the merits of my candidate and his superior claim to their votes over that of the Conservative candidates, who had coalesced. He did not disagree with me, but rather abruptly turned the conversation to the question of the Squire's views on the 'Corn Laws'—the unknown subject which had been propounded by Mr. Walton. Making a happy guess at what their bearing might be on the farming interest, I ventured to remark that it was not likely that the Squire, who farmed a hundred acres of arable land, would support any measure that would reduce the price of corn. Mr. Ball seemed struck with my reasoning, and, taking advantage of the pause during which he considered it, I turned to Miss Ball and observed that, if the Squire got in, he would certainly give a grand ball at the Hall.

'Are you sure, Mr. Frank? A real *supper* ball?'

‘Quite certain, Miss Ball; and I hope you will dance the first dance with me.’

‘That I will, and as many as you may ask me to.’

I looked at her pretty face, and gave the promise with a fuller intent of carrying it into effect than any I had committed myself to in the course of the day.

‘Oh, but that’s jolly!’ exclaimed she. ‘We’ll *make* father vote for Squire, and Dick too.’

I turned homeward, well pleased with my day’s work, and pretty tired, as was my cob, for I had ridden quite thirty miles.

The next day was the first of the polling, which went on, I think, for four or five days, resulting in the Squire’s triumphant return by a majority of one hundred votes. I am glad to record that all my promises, express or implied, were carried out to the letter, and I led Miss Ball down the first country dance and one or two after.

GEORGE ROOPER.

## *Selborne Revisited.*

SOMEWHERE about the year 1830, half a century or so after Gilbert White's fame had been established, an adventurous naturalist journeyed down by rough ways to the then remote village of Selborne, to see it for himself and describe its condition to the world. The way is not long nor rough in these times, and on every summer day, almost at every hour of the day, strangers from all parts of the country, with not a few from foreign lands, may be seen in the old village street. Of these visitors that come like shadows, so depart, nine in every ten, or possibly nineteen in every twenty, have no real interest in Gilbert White and his work and the village he lived in, but are members of that innumerable tribe of gadders about the land who religiously visit every spot which, they are told, ought to be seen.

One morning during my late visit (July, 1901) I went at six o'clock for a stroll on the common, and on going up the Hanger noticed a couple of bicycles lying at the foot of the hill; then, half-way up, I found the cyclists—two young ladies—resting on the turf by the side of the Zigzag. They were conversing together as I went by, and one having asked some question which I did not hear, the other replied: 'Oh, no! he lived a very long time ago, and wrote a history of Selborne. About birds and that.' To which the other returned, 'Oh; ' and then they talked of something else.

These ladies had probably got up at four o'clock that morning and ridden several miles to visit the village and go up the Hanger before breakfast. Later in the day they would be at other places where other Hampshire celebrities, big and little, had been born or had lived or died—Chawton, Steventon, Alresford, Winchester, Otterbourne, Buriton, Boldre, and a dozen more; and one, the informed, would say to her uninformed companion, 'Oh dear, no; he, or she, lived a long, long time ago, somewhere about the eighteenth century—or perhaps it was the sixteenth—and did some-

thing, or wrote fiction or history or philosophy, and that.' To which the other would intelligently answer, 'Oh,' and then they would remount their bicycles and go on to some other place.

Although a large majority of the visitors are of this description, there are others of a different kind—the true pilgrims; and these are mostly naturalists who have been familiar from boyhood with the famous *Letters*, who love the memory of Gilbert White, and regard the spot where he was born, to which he was so deeply attached, and where his ashes lie, as almost a sacred place. It is but natural that some of these, who are the true and only Selbornians, albeit they may not call themselves by a name which has been filched from them, should have given an account of a first visit, their impression of a spot so familiar in description but never realised until seen, and of its effect on the mind. But no one, so far as I know, has given any account of a second or of any subsequent visit. And there is a good reason for this: for though the place is in itself beautiful and never loses its charm, it is, I think, impossible for anyone to recover a feeling experienced on a first sight. If I, unlike others, write of Selborne revisited, it is not because there is anything fresh to say of an old vanished emotion, a feeling which forms a singular and delightful experience in the life of many a naturalist, but which cannot last and which comes but once. And once is surely enough. There are many who are schoolboys now, some in this island and some in countries beyond the sea, who will experience it in due time, even as I, born under southern stars, did in my time; and these and others after them will successively tell the story of their visit to the Hampshire village.

Selborne is now to me like any other pleasant rural place: in the village street; in the churchyard; by the Lyth and the Bourne, and on the Hanger and Common, I feel that I am

In a green and undiscovered ground;

the feeling that the naturalist must or should always experience in all places where Nature is, even as Coventry Patmore always experienced it in the presence of women. He had paid more than ordinary attention to their ways, and knew that he had yet much to learn.

How irrecoverable the first feeling is—a feeling which may be almost like a sense of an unseen presence, as I have described it in an account of my first visit to Selborne<sup>1</sup>—was impressed upon

<sup>1</sup> *Birds and Man*. Longmans.

me on the occasion of a second visit two or three years later. There was then no return of the feeling—no faintest trace of it. The village was like any other, only more interesting because of several amusing incidents in bird life which I by chance witnessed when there. Animals in a state of nature do not often move us to mirth, but on this occasion I was made to laugh several times. At first it was at an owl at Alton. I arrived there in the evening of a wet, rough day in May, 1898, too late to walk the five miles that remained to my destination. After securing a room at the hotel I hurried out to look at the fine old church, which Gilbert White admired in his day; but it was growing dark, so that there was nothing for me but to stand in the wind and rain in the wet churchyard and get a general idea of the outline of the building with its handsome shingled spire standing tall against the wild gloomy sky. By and by a vague figure appeared out of the clouds, travelling against the wind towards the spire, and looking more like a ragged piece of newspaper whirled about the heavens than any living thing. It was a white owl, and after watching him for some time I came to the conclusion that he was trying to get to the vane on the spire. A very idle ambition it seemed, for although he succeeded again and again in getting to within a few yards of the point aimed at, he was on each occasion struck by a fresh violent gust and driven back to a great distance, often quite out of sight in the gloom. But presently he would reappear, still struggling to reach the vane. A crazy bird! but I could not help admiring his pluck, and greatly wondered what his secret motive in aiming at that windy perch could be. And at last, after so many defeats, he succeeded, and grasped the metal cross-bar with his crooked talons. The wind, with all its fury, could not tear him from it, and after a little flapping he was able to pull himself up; and then, bending down, he deliberately wiped his beak on the bar and flew away! This, then, had been his powerful, mysterious motive—just to wipe his beak, which he could very well have wiped on any branch or barn-roof or fence, and saved himself that tremendous labour!

This was an extreme instance of the tyrannous effect of habit on a wild animal. Doubtless this bird had been accustomed, after devouring his first mouse, to fly to the vane, where he could rest for a few minutes, taking a general view of the place, and wipe his beak at the same time; and the habit had become so strong that he could not forego his visit even on so tempestuous an evening.

His beak, if he had wiped it anywhere but on that lofty cross-bar, would have seemed not quite clean.

At Selborne, in the garden at the Wakes, I noticed a pair of pied wagtails busy nest-building in the ivy on the wall. One of the birds flew up to the roof of the house, and there, I suppose, caught sight of a fly in an upper window which looked on to the roof, for all at once he rose up and dashed against the pane with great force; and as the glass pane hit back with equal force he was thrown on to the tiles under the window. Nothing daunted, he got up and dashed against the glass a second time, with the same result. The action was repeated five times; then the poor baffled bird withdrew from the contest, and, drawing in his head, sat hunched up for two or three minutes perfectly motionless. The volatile creature would not have sat there so quietly if he had not hurt himself rather badly.

One more of the amusing incidents I witnessed during that second visit must be told. Several pairs of martins were making their nests under the eaves of a cottage opposite to the Queen's Arms, where I stayed; and on going out about seven o'clock in the morning I stood to watch some of the birds getting mud at a pool which had been made by the night's rain in the middle of the street. It happened that some fowls had come out of the inn yard, and were walking and standing near the puddle picking up gravel or any small morsel they could find. Among them was a cockerel, a big, ungainly yellowish Cochin, in the hobbledehoy stage of that ugliest and most ungraceful variety. For some time this bird stood idly by the pool, but by and by the movements of the martins coming and going between the cottage and the puddle attracted his attention, and he began to watch them with a strange interest; and then all at once he made a vicious peck at one occupied in deftly gathering a pellet of clay close to his great feathered feet. The martin flitted lightly away, and after a turn or two dropped down again at almost the same spot. The fowl had watched it, and as soon as it came down moved a step or two nearer to it with deliberation, then made a violent dash and peck at it, but was no nearer to hitting it than before. The same thing occurred again and again, the martin growing shyer after each attack; then other martins came, and he, finding them less cautious than the first, stalked them in turn and made futile attacks on them. Convinced at last that it was not possible for him to injure or touch these elusive little creatures, he determined that they should gather no mud at that

place, and with head up he watched them circling like great flies around him, dashing savagely at them whenever they came lower, or paused in their flight, or dropped lightly down on the margin. It was a curious and amusing spectacle—the big, shapeless, lumbering bird chasing them round and round the pool in his stupid spite; they by contrast so beautiful in their shining purple mantles and snow-white breasts and stockinged feet, their fairy-like ærial bodies that responded so quickly to every motion of their bright, quick little minds. It was like a very heavy policeman ‘moving on’ a flock of fairies.

One remembers Æsop’s dog in the manger, and thinks that this and many of the apologues are really nothing but everyday incidents in animal life, told just as they happened, with the addition of speech (in some cases quite unnecessary) put in the mouths of the various actors. Æsop’s dog did not want to be disturbed in his bed of hay, and was not such an unredeemed curmudgeon as the Selborne fowl: but this unlovely temper or feeling—spite and petty tyranny, and persecution—is exceedingly common in the lower animals, from the higher vertebrates down to the insects as anyone who observes their actions may see.

My third and last visit to Selborne was in July last. I went there on the 12th and stayed till the 23rd. Now July, when the business of breeding is over or far advanced and all the best songsters are dropping into silence, and when the foliage is deepening to a uniform monotonous dark green, is, next to August, the least interesting month of the year. But at Selborne I was singularly fortunate, although the season was excessively dry and hot. The heat was indeed great all over the country, but I doubt if there exists a warmer village than Selborne, unless it be one in some to me unknown coombe in Cornwall or Devon. Thus on July 19, when the temperature rose to ninety degrees in the shade in the City of London, we had it as high as ninety-four degrees in Selborne. The village lies in a kind of trough at the foot of a wall-like hill. If it were not for the moisture and the greenery that surrounds and almost covers it, hanging, as it were, like a cloud above it, the heat would doubtless be some degrees greater.

These conditions, in whatever way they may affect the human inhabitants, appear to be exceedingly favourable to the house crickets. It was impossible for anyone to walk in the village street of an evening without noticing the noise they made. The cottages on both sides of the street seemed to be alive with

them, so that, walking, one was assailed by their shrilling in both ears. Hearing them so much sent me in search of their wild cousin of the fields and of the mole cricket, but no sound of them could I hear. It was too late for them to sing. No doubt—as White, I think, conjectured—the artificial conditions which civilised man has made for the house cricket have considerably altered its habits. Like the canary and other finches that thrive in captivity, a uniform indoor climate with food easily found have made it a singer all the year round. I trust we shall never take to the Japanese custom of caging insects for the sake of their music; but it is probable that a result of keeping tamed or domesticated field crickets would be to set them singing at all seasons against the cricket on the hearth. A listener would then be able to judge which of the two ‘sweet and tiny cousins’ is the better performer. The house cricket has to my ears a louder, coarser, a more creaky sound; but we hear him, as a rule, in a room, singing, as it were, confined in a big box, and I remember the case of the skylark and the disagreeable effect of its shrill and harsh spluttering song when heard from a cage hanging against a wall. The field cricket, like the soaring skylark, has the wide expanse of open air to soften and etherealise the sound.

Gilbert White lived in an age which had its own little firmly established conventional ideas about nature, which he, open-air man though he was, did not escape, or else felt bound to respect. Thus, the prolonged wild beautiful call of the peacock, the finest sound made by any domesticated creature, was to the convention of the day ‘disgustful,’ and as a disgustful sound he sets it down accordingly; and when he speaks of the keen pleasure it gave him to listen to the field cricket he writes in a somewhat apologetic strain:—‘Sounds do not always give us pleasure according to their sweetness and melody, nor do harsh sounds always displease. We are more apt to be captivated or disgusted with the associations which they promote than with the notes themselves. Thus the shrilling of the field cricket, though sharp and stridulous, yet marvellously delights some hearers, filling their minds with a train of summer ideas of everything that is rural, verdurous and joyous.’

The delight I know, but I cannot wholly agree with the explanation. A couple of months before this visit to Selborne, on May 25, on passing some small grass fields enclosed in high untrimmed hedges, on the border of a pine wood by Southampton Water, I all at once became conscious of a sound which indeed had been for

some time in my ears, increasing in volume as I went on until it forced my attention to it. When I listened I found myself in a place where field crickets were in extraordinary abundance: there must have been many hundreds within hearing distance, and their delicate shrilling came from the grass and hedges all round me. It was as if all the field crickets in the county had congregated and were holding a grand musical festival at that spot. I hope it is an annual festival, so that I may hear them again when May comes round. A dozen or twenty house crickets in a kitchen would have made more noise: this was not loud, nor could it properly be described as a noise; it was more like a subtle music without rise or fall or change; or like a continuous diffused silvery-bright musical hum, which surrounded one like an atmosphere, and at the same time pervaded and trembled through one like a vibration. It was certainly very delightful, and the feeling in this instance was not due to association, but, I think, to the intrinsic beauty of the sound itself.

The Selborne stream, or Bourne, with its meadows and tangled copses on either side, was my favourite noon-day haunt. The volume of water does not greatly diminish during the summer months, but in many places the bed of the stream was quite grown over with aquatic plants, topped with figwort, huge water agrimony with its masses of powdery flesh-coloured blooms, creamy meadow-sweet, and rose-purple loosestrife and willow-herb, with its appetising odour of codlins and cream. But I was most interested in the wild musk or monkey-flower, an American importation which has become a wilding with us, and is now abundant at Selborne. At one spot a mass of it grew at the foot of a high bank on the water's edge; from the top of the bank long branches of briar rose trailed down, and the rich pure yellow *mimulus* blossoms and ivory white roses of the briar were seen together. An even lovelier effect was produced at another spot by the mingling of the yellow flowers with the large turquoise-blue water forget-me-nots.

I tried here, as I had tried in other places in Hampshire, to find out how long this plant had been known in a wild state. But the replies I got were contradictory. A middle-aged man assured me that he had known the plant growing by the Bourne since his boyhood; but at a cottage by the stream an old woman who had lived there most of her life declared that the plant had escaped from her own garden 'a few years ago' and spread along the stream. Her daughter confirmed this statement. These two,

mother and daughter, were in strong contrast, and seemed to represent among the cottagers the old and the new Selborne. The lean old flat-chested woman in her limp dress and in her speech was a typical Hampshire peasant of the last generation. The daughter was painfully modern, or up-to-date—a very detestable state for a village woman to be in. She informed me that she possessed a copy of the *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, and she added, 'Of course, all that about birds is rot, but the history of the Priory is very interesting.'

The most charming of the Selborne wild plants that flower in July is the musk mallow. So rarely seen elsewhere, it was quite common round the village; and perhaps the finest plant I saw was in the churchyard, growing luxuriantly by a humble grave near the little gate that opens to the Lyth and Bourne. As it is known to few persons, there must almost every day have been strangers and pilgrims in the churchyard who looked with admiration on that conspicuous plant with its deep-cut scented geranium-like beautiful leaves, tender grey-green in colour, and its profusion of delicate silky rose-coloured flowers. Many would look on it as some rare exotic, and wonder at its being there by that lowly green mound. But to the residents it was a musk mallow and nothing more—a weed in the churchyard.

When, one morning, I found two men mowing the grass I called their attention to this plant and asked them to spare it, telling them that it was one which the daily visitors to the village would admire above all the red geraniums and other gardener's flowers which they would have to leave untouched. This simple request appeared to put them out a good deal: they took their hats off and wiped the sweat from their foreheads, and after gravely pondering the matter for some time said they would 'see about it' or 'bear it in mind' when they came round to that side. In the afternoon, when the mowing was done, I returned and found that the musk mallow had not been spared.

On July 13, when I arrived at Selborne, the thrushes, nightingale and warblers had ceased singing, with the sole exception of the wood wren. At all events, one bird of this pretty species was still uttering his tremulous song in the beeches on the Hanger. I heard it for three days, and then it ceased, to begin again no doubt in late August or September. But there were other singers, and the place was anything but silent. Wood-pigeons in numbers roosted on the Hanger, and at half-past three o'clock in the morning their cooing would begin, to last for nearly an hour. My

bedroom (the window of which looked out on the Hanger) was on the first floor of a cottage in the village street, and I was always glad to be awake early to listen to the concert. The effect was curious, as individual voices could not be distinguished owing to the numbers of the birds—hundreds and hundreds all cooing together in unison; the village was flooded as it were with the volume of deep, human-like sound, which was rolled down upon it from the steep wooded hill.

About four o'clock the lively vigorous song of the ciril-bunting would be heard from the garden or grounds of the Wakes, at the foot of the hill. From four to six, at intervals, was his best singing time; later in the day he sang at much longer intervals. There appeared to be three pairs of breeding birds: one at the Wakes, another on the top of the hill to the left of the Zigzag path, and a third below the churchyard. The cock bird of the last pair sang at intervals every day during my visit from a tree in the churchyard or from a big sycamore growing at the side of it. On July 14 I had a good opportunity of judging the penetrative power of this bunting's voice, for by chance, just as the bells commenced ringing for the six o'clock Sunday evening service, the bird, perched on a small cypress in the churchyard, began to sing. Though only about forty yards from the tower, he was not in the least discomposed by the clanging of the bells, but sang at proper intervals the usual number of times—six or eight—his high incisive voice sounding distinct through that tempest of jangled metallic noise.

I was often at Farrington, a village close by, and there too the churchyard had its ciril-bunting, singing merrily at intervals from a perch not above thirty yards from the building. And as at Selborne and Farrington, so I have found it in most places in Hampshire, especially in the southern half of the county; the ciril is the village bunting whose favourite singing place is in the quiet churchyard or the shade-trees at the farm: compared with other members of the genus he might indeed be called our domestic bunting. The yellowhammer is never heard in a village: at Selborne to find him one had to climb the hill and go out on the common, and there he could be heard drawling out his lazy song all day long. How curious to think that, in spite of the acuteness of his hearing where bird sounds were concerned, Gilbert White never distinguished between these two species, although it is probable that he heard the ciril on every summer day during the greater part of his life.

During the hot hours one could always hear a goldfinch singing in the trees by the Lyth and the Bourne. The brightest and best of our finches is commoner in Hampshire than any other part of the country known to me, but it is almost exclusively confined to the watercourses. You may spend a whole day, or even many days, in places where there are no rivers without seeing or hearing the bird, but no sooner do you come into the valley of the Test or Itchen or other stream than you are greeted by the familiar quick lively *twit-twit* of the goldfinch. Even the Selborne stream was not too insignificant to have a few of these birds by it.

The bullfinch, too, was here in the green shady nooks by the stream. But this bird, I found, was most abundant two or three miles away, at the back of Noar Hill—the Hanger's big beech-grown neighbour. Here it is a broken wooded country, with exceedingly deep shaded lanes that lead you by Empshott, Hawkley, and that not easily-discoverable village, Prior's Dean, which consists of a small old farmhouse and smaller, ancient, most desolate-looking church. If you want to find the church at Prior's Dean, the saying runs, you must first cut down the nettles. Among these deep lanes, which are sometimes like green twilight tunnels, it was indeed silent in mid-July—silent and deserted, since no visitor to White's village and no cyclist thinks it worth his while to explore them. Walking in these shady places one constantly hears the faint plaintive little piping sound, the almost inaudible alarm note of the concealed bullfinch; and following the sound out suddenly dashes the bird, showing his sharp-winged shape and grey and black upper plumage marked with white for a moment or two, before vanishing once more in the overhanging foliage. But nobody cares how common he may be, since he can do no injury there with his cutting beak. It is practically a fruitless country, though sloes, blackberries and other wild fruits are abundant enough in the hedges in autumn, and are shared by the birds and children.

I think the most important wild birds at Selborne were the magpies. There was a small family party of them—a pair of old birds and their young, and they were almost domestic. During my stay they invariably spent the early morning hours hunting for worms and insects on the green open park-like grounds of the Wakes, between the village street and the Hanger. When the dew dried they would work their way round by the back of the church to the Lyth, and then down the stream

towards the Priory. Now a little way down on that side there are pheasant preserves where the keepers are as zealously bent on the extirpation of what they call 'vermin' as any of their kind. How is it, I asked, that these Selborne magpies that chatter in the trees and run and play on the sward quite fearlessly where people are about, escape destruction when they go down to the sacred ground? I was assured that it was because they knew perfectly well where the danger was; that when they arrived at the limits of the preserves they became exceedingly cautious and shy, and would not then allow any person to get a sight of them; but that as soon as they came out of that dangerous place they cast their caution aside once more.

I have already once mentioned Farringdon. In the great mass of literature concerning Gilbert White there is curiously little said about this village; yet it has one of the most interesting old churches in the county—the church in which White officiated for a quarter of a century, during all the best years of his life, in fact, since, when he resigned the curacy of Farringdon, after having accepted that of Selborne, for which he had waited so long, he was within two years of bidding a formal farewell to natural history and within eight of his death. The church register from 1760 to 1785 is written in his now familiar clear, beautiful hand; and in the rectory gardens there is a large Spanish chestnut tree planted by him. The village, too, is very near to Selborne. How long it took White to get there from the Wakes, where he lived, on foot and on horseback, I cannot say; on a bicycle it took me fifteen minutes, and I have done it in less time. I went there, to begin with, because of White's long connection with the village, but I soon found that the place was in itself attractive. Although not so fortunate in its surroundings as Selborne, with its Lyth and flowing stream and wooded Hanger, Farringdon village, with its noble church and quaint old farm buildings and cottages, is the better village of the two. At the side of the churchyard there is great old oast-house, now used as a barn, which for quaintness and beauty has not its match in England. The churchyard itself is a pretty, peaceful wilderness, with ivy and bramble hanging to the old trees, and creeping, too, over the green mounds and grey lichened trunks. Long may it be kept sacred from the gardener, with his abhorred pruning-hook, his basket of geranium cuttings—hateful flower!—and his brushwood broom to make it tidy. Finally, Farringdon possesses a wonderful old churchyard yew, which deserves to be better

known to all who admire or are curious in the venerated tree. 'Hampshire's weed' it has been called, on account of its abundance in the county, but it is worthy of some greater title—'Britain's Dragon-tree,' let us say. The name would, for a double reason, fit the Farringdon yew, which is as large round within a few inches as the famous Selborne yew, and immensely older in appearance, and with its vast trunk split into many parts, and its strange crown of rough-barked, rust-coloured, gnarled and twisted interlacing branches, is the most ancient, ruinous, and desolate-looking churchyard yew to be seen in the country.

Farringdon, I found, was a village much haunted by swifts; there were twice as many birds as at Selborne. It was, however, at the last-named village that I watched these curious birds with keenest interest; but the swifts I watched, strange to say, were not the native Selborne birds. When I arrived I took particular notice of the swallows and swifts—that was but natural in Gilbert White's village. The swallows, I was sorry to find, had decreased so greatly in numbers since my former visits that there were but few left. The house martins, though still not scarce, had also fallen off a good deal. Of swifts there were about eight or nine pairs, all with young in their nests, in holes under the eaves of different cottages. The old birds appeared to be very much taken up with feeding their young: they ranged about almost in solitude, never more than four or five birds being seen together, and that only in the evening, and even when in company they were silent and their flight comparatively languid. This continued from the 12th to the 16th, but on that day, at a little past seven o'clock in the evening, I was astonished to see a party of over fifty swifts rushing through the air over the village in the usual mad swift way, uttering excited screams as they streamed by. Rising to some height in the air, they would float, scattering over the church for a few moments, then close and rush down and stream across the Plestor, coming as low as the roofs of the cottages, then along the village street for a distance of forty or fifty yards, after which they would mount up and return to the church, to repeat the same race over the same course again and again. They continued their pastime for an hour or longer, and then the flock began to diminish, and in a short time had quite melted away.

On the following evening I was absent, but some friends staying at the village watched for me, and they reported that the

birds appeared after seven o'clock and played about the place for an hour or two, then vanished as before.

On the afternoon of the 18th I went with my friends to the field behind the churchyard, from which a view of the sky all round can be obtained. Four or five swifts were visible quietly flying about the sky, all wide apart. At six o'clock a little bunch of half a dozen swifts formed, and began to chase each other in the usual way, and the other birds, singly and in twos and threes, began to arrive. Some of these were seen coming to the spot from the direction of Alton. Gradually the bunch grew until it was a big crowd numbering seventy to eighty birds, and as it grew the excitement of the birds increased: until eight o'clock they kept up their aerial gambols, and then, as on the previous evenings, the flock gradually dispersed.

On the evening of the 19th the performance was repeated, the birds congregated numbering about sixty. On the 20th the number had diminished to about forty, and an equal number returned on the following evening; and this was the last time. We watched in vain for them on the 22nd: no swifts but the half a dozen Selborne birds usually to be seen towards evening were visible; nor did they return on any other day up to the 24th, when my visit came to an end.

It is possible, and even probable, that these swifts which came from a distance to hold their evening games at Selborne were birds that had already finished breeding, and were now free to go from home and spend a good deal of time in purely recreative exercises. The curious point is that they should have made choice of this sultry spot for such a purpose. It was, besides, new to me to find that swifts do sometimes go from home to indulge in such pastimes. I had always thought that the birds seen pursuing each other with screams through the sky at any place were the dwellers and breeders in the locality; and that, I believe, is the idea that most persons have.

W. H. HUDSON.

## *The Blush.*

IN 1769 people from the neighbouring châteaux in that charming district of the Bourbonnais which now forms the Department of the Allier often made parties to Bessay merely to see the terraced orchard-garden, the creation of Madame la Marquise de Bessay. She was proud of it, and with reason.

But it is not in his mother's orchard-garden that we shall find Gaspar Elie Dieudonné, the young Chevalier de Bessay, on this May afternoon, when the thick arms of the apple-trees, laden with pink bouquets, make the place a vision—a vision, too, that will last a week if the fine weather holds—of fresh festal bloom. The wall which backed the eastern terrace had a door in it, giving on the woods. From this door a winding path, followed for ten minutes, took you to an artificial clearing in the middle of a birch plantation. Here stood a two-storied pavilion of fantastic architecture, known as the Chevalier's. It was his habit to spend the best part of the summer days in this place.

On the special afternoon with which we have to do, Gaspar was neither playing on his beautiful little violin, nor making wild verses in his head, nor studying a Latin author with the help of M. Letourneau, the *curé* of the village of Bessay. He was alone this afternoon, idle, and, to judge by his face, out of spirits. He lay rather than sat, with his legs stretched out along the finely mosaicked floor, and his arm flung over the arm of his chair, and his head dropped on his arm. He was a short young fellow of one-and-twenty; broad in build; he had a dark-skinned face with a fine, powerful forehead; his other features were neither good nor bad, but when he smiled he looked handsome.

The room, a large and long one, took up the whole first floor of the pavilion. It was furnished like a *salon*—elegantly, but very sparsely. This emptiness, together with the air of luxury there was about the few things the apartment did contain, had a strange effect.

At Bessay everyone understood that, with the exception of his mother, his valet, and his friend, M. Letourneau, no one was to enter the Chevalier's pavilion in the wood without an invitation. But this afternoon there came slowly and carefully along the winding path a person who was none of these, and yet had not been invited—a girl of sixteen, small and slight; her piquant little face had a colour so brilliant it shamed the best red and white of the older lady visitors up at the château; her large eyes spoke as only Creole eyes speak, and in her movements there was the inimitable, half-lively, half-lazy Creole grace.

The little sylph, who was dressed in a thin white gown with a short train to it, a lace fichu, and an immense shepherdess hat all over flowers, pinned on her left ear—the child, I say, had taken off her high-heeled white satin shoes and carried them in one hand. Apparently her idea was to surprise the solitary dreamer in the pavilion. Light as a fawn, she advanced, indeed, like a fairy; without a sound she mounted the five marble steps up to the glass door of the pavilion. It stood open; scarcely breathing, she passed in.

Gaspar did not move. He seemed to be staring down at the floor. Well satisfied, the young girl glided to the other end of the room. Pushed into a corner, in what seemed an ill-chosen position, there was a table in marqueterie. On it lay Gaspar's violin. The girl dropped beside the instrument a handful of wild lemon-coloured flowers. They were not much to look at, these children of the hedgerow, but they had a peculiar and pleasant though exceedingly faint fragrance. Lucette (they called her so, her name was Lucinde) had heard Gaspar de Bessay speaking of the smell of these flowers; he loved it, he said. He did not think there were any out yet, he had not noticed the odour in his walks.

Thereupon Lucette had an idea. She took her maid with her, very loth, and went a-hunting. Here were her spoils. She meant to leave the flowers lying by Gaspar's violin, and when he came that way, as he was sure to do soon, for he had a great habit of pacing the room, he would discover by the perfume that they were there, and go and feel for them, and take them up in his hand, and be—oh, so charmingly puzzled, so inordinately surprised!

You guess it now. The Chevalier de Bessay was blind. His sight had been destroyed by an accident when he was a child of six. His father, who valued his children according as they

pleased his vanity, had cared little for the sight of him since. His mother, singularly severe with the elder ones of the family, had had the weak, nay, let us say, the strong spot in her heart touched by the terrible misfortune of the bold, robust, forward little boy. He had been born eight years after his one brother and three sisters, so it was easy for her to spoil him. His nature, generous and a little grave, and profoundly loving, stood the spoiling fairly well. As he grew up, his great fault was that he was unsociable. He avoided his fellow-creatures, civilly, cheerfully, but he did avoid them. This spring a marriage was in course of arrangement for Gaspar's elder brother. He bore the title of Comte de Valmény, was twenty-eight, colonel in a smart regiment, strikingly handsome, a favourite at Court, and a joyous spendthrift. As he inherited the latter quality from his father, it became necessary about this time for Madame la Marquise to consider the money question. Lucinde de la Rose, the bride she had looked out for De Valmény, belonged to the little provincial nobility, while De Bessay is a name both ancient and illustrious; but then Lucinde's father had made a huge fortune in Martinique, where he married the daughter of a proprietor of the island.

Returning as a widower with the fourteen-year-old Lucette to France, he bought Combes, an estate in the Bourbonnais, near Bessay. The Marquise and her husband took notice of him. They had decided that the little heiress would do for their elder son. It would be a useful match for De Valmény, and a brilliant one for a young lady who was only called De la Rose.

The man who had made the money they wanted fell in with their views. He was ambitious for his darling. He wanted to see Lucette at Court. The affair by this time was almost as good as concluded, and here, after two years at a Paris convent school, was Lucette, a guest at Bessay, occupied in making the acquaintance of her future relatives. Her future husband she had not yet seen—De Valmény was expected in three days' time. But her acquaintance with the Chevalier began to be quite an old one; she had been six long weeks at Bessay.

Now before leaving the pavilion she cast a lingering glance towards Gaspar. There was something like soreness at her heart. It seemed to her that during the few last days a cloud had come between them. What it was, the whence or the wherefore of it, whether his fault or hers, she knew not. She wished it away, and

yet—— She could not frankly say, 'Aren't we as much friends as ever? Have I offended you?'

It was partly because of this uncomfortable consciousness that she had brought her flowers stealthily. Her stratagem was a success; she only had to get away now; but she delayed. Suddenly Gaspar raised himself up.

'Well,' he said.

Lucette started.

'It's Lucette,' she said quickly.

'I knew that as you came up the steps.'

'And took no notice of me? Oh!'

'I perceived that you wanted me to be ignorant of your presence. It is not often I can please a lady. When I can——'

'Why did you speak at last?'

'I don't know.'

There was a pause. Gaspar's face was turned towards her. But for a peculiar fixity in their gaze, the full black eyes of the young man bore no mark of his infirmity. The visual nerves were withered; the orbs remained intact. His tone had been that of polite persiflage, but he looked serious, almost—and this was rare in him—severe. Lucette stood doubtful. Her beauty had a character of exquisiteness and frailness; she was, however, a strong little girl—headstrong too, some people said.

With formal courtesy Gaspar invited her to be seated. Such a manner wounded her in him like an insult.

'No, thank you,' she said haughtily.

She moved to the door. Not for the world would she have mentioned her pastoral offering. But, feebly delicate though the smell of the flowers was, Gaspar had detected it from afar.

'I am much obliged to you for the *Queen's favours*,' he said, standing up. (This was their country name in the province.) 'So much goodness is too much,' he added, still speaking like an automaton.

Lucette bit her lip. She remembered her shoes, and drew them on in a great hurry.

'Good-bye,' she said lightly.

Gaspar, with a business-like air, said that he would escort her as far as the orchard-garden.

'Don't give yourself the trouble.'

'I am not altogether a boor. The wood is my domain, and I must see you off it.'

He took up his oak stick, though he scarcely needed it in the wood path, of which he knew every step. They started at a leisurely pace. For a few moments nothing was said. Strangely enough, Gaspar's pathetic fixed look forward seemed to be repeated in the face of Lucette, as she walked along with her head bent down. All at once she changed. She began talking, chattering, in her liquid, rather low, yet clear voice, that charming voice which was perhaps her best gift. Gaily she talked, imitating the childish abandonment and liveliness which had so irresistibly won on Gaspar when first she came, a bold affectionate little intruder, into his luxurious hermitage. How many good laughs they had had! She laughed still. Gaspar, subtle of ear though he was, did not observe anything forced in the tinkling fall of merry notes. What was this she was saying?

' . . . So I am considered an excellent horsewoman, and to-morrow, when father and I return to Combes we shall ride, and a great party from Bessay will escort us, and we shall have luncheon at Combes on the lawn of Diana, and afterwards dancing and any other mad fun we can invent. My father says there is no Salic law at Combes, but I am Queen, and he is prime minister.'

' Ah, yes. You leave Bessay to-morrow.'

' They tell me it would not be proper for me to be here when the Comte de Valmény comes.' There had been a shade of embarrassment in her manner; she went on instantly, ' How charming life is! Don't you think so?' Not waiting for a reply, ' And I forgot to tell you: this afternoon, an hour before dinner, M. Monton, the poet, you know, who has actually corresponded with M. de Voltaire, is going to read some of his own verses in the yellow *salon*, and—imagine!—since being at Bessay he has composed a new piece—on what subject do you suppose? Me. He will read that one last; it is a dead secret; but your sister, Madame du Puy, kindly told me, in order that I might have time to think of a pretty impromptu speech of thanks.'

They had come to the door in the wall. Gaspar stooped forward and opened it without any difficulty.

' And have you thought of one?' he inquired.

' No, but I have two hours yet. Won't you come over at five and judge as to how I acquit myself?'

To her surprise, Gaspar replied quietly, ' Yes, I will come.'

Lucette grew silent. She looked before her at the great green garden, crowded with blossomy branches. Above, lining the walk on each terrace, were more fruit trees yet in wreathy ranks, and

rose trees on a lofty green trellis-work climbed from garden to terraces. These just began to show among their little leaves the reds and whites and yellows of buds; they had their feet set in a wilderness of strawberry plants and old sweet herbs. It was one of those days when between the eye and all else it sees dances the white butterfly. The sun delighted himself in all this life, set free on every side a thousand thousand thrilling, infinitesimally humble, springtime joys, heightened colours and odours to ecstasy point.

Lucette sighed.

Her eyes sought Gaspar. She longed intensely to see on his dark face the smile which gave it fascination. But she felt a chill, a powerlessness upon her. She dared not now attempt the thing she had been used never to fail in. She only looked with helpless, hungry eyes.

'Then *au revoir*,' said Gaspar.

'*Au revoir*,' laughed Lucette.

She ran off. Gaspar listened till the light quick footsteps died away in his darkness. Then he returned to the pavilion.

Later in the afternoon M. Letourneau, the *curé* of the village of Bessay, walked with bent back and long strides up the wood path. He seldom passed a day without making time to visit his friend and pupil. He had taught the Chevalier to read and write while the Chevalier could still see. And as time went on he had contrived by oral instruction alone to make a fair classical scholar of the lad. Letourneau himself, who never amassed anything else, had somehow got together an amount of learning very extraordinary in a country *curé*. What he could not learn was how to try for promotion.

He was an elderly man, tall and thin, and so awkwardly proportioned that he looked, said a wit at the château, as if Nature, while turning him off, had been for once as absent-minded as was habitually M. Letourneau himself. His shabby cassock hung with a scarecrow air of defiance from the salient angles of this ill-constructed framework. The face, weather-marked, sunken, and long-featured, had a look which attracted. The heart showed through.

Clearer and clearer, as he hurried along the wood path, Letourneau heard, coming from the pavilion, the wild tones of Gaspar's violin. It complained, sobbed, screamed. Then there was a noise as if twenty devils were all at the same time impro-

vising original arias on the instrument; stillness followed, and Letourneau, mounting the steps at one stride, saw Gaspar with his fiddle raised above his head in the very act of dashing it down upon the floor. He looked as if the next moment he would have trampled on it.

'Gaspar!' cried the *curé*.

The young man's arm fell harmless by his side. He crossed the room, left clear in order that his movements might be unimpeded, laid the violin on the table in the corner, and stood there with his back turned. Letourneau came up to him.

'What ails you, my son?' he said.

'I got in a passion with my fiddle,' said Gaspar.

The *curé* shook his head.

'I wish I could help you,' he said simply. 'You have some trouble. You don't look like yourself, and you have lost all interest' (here Letourneau unconsciously grew reproachful) 'in our translation of the Georgics. If you don't wish to speak you won't speak, but—I wish I could help you.'

'Nothing ails me,' said Gaspar, 'except that I am a fool. As for the Georgics, it's true I can't work to-day.'

'I knew it,' said Letourneau plaintively.

He was very vain of the bold original ear for verse which Gaspar's part in this production revealed, and a little vain of the accurate scholarship he himself had contributed thereto. He hoped before long to surprise the world by an elegant booklet with notes—the notes entirely his own.

'No, I can't work to-day,' said Gaspar, 'for I have promised to go and hear an ass give a poetical reading up at the château, and I am due there now; but to-morrow, my friend, we will make up for lost time; to-morrow——' He paused, his hand wandered over the table, he took up one of Lucette's fading pale flowers, and pressed it against his face. 'Yes, to-morrow,' he repeated in a strange tone, 'but meanwhile give me your arm. You must come with me, you know.'

'As far as the door,' said Letourneau hastily.

'Into the yellow *salon*.'

'No, no. I have——'

'Plenty of leisure, for you came here ready for Virgil.'

'My old cassock,' murmured Letourneau, after a minute spent in searching out a better excuse than the one Gaspar had anticipated. 'My housekeeper assures me that it is a scandal; I am even afraid she will soon refuse to mend it any more, and I

am seriously, very seriously thinking that I must some day get a new one. Then——'

'Then you shall cut out the *abbé*, who is staying at the château. My mother assures me that he is the most exquisite of dandies; only burn the old cassock, or you will be putting it on in mistake. I don't know that your eyes are of much more use than mine, after all, *mon maître*. Are you coming?'

'Yes,' said Letourneau.

The scene in the yellow *salon* was a brilliant one. In a semi-circle sat a score or so of women. Many of them were really young and handsome, while the rest, by the aid of paint, powder, and strength of will, managed to appear so—or very nearly. Full toilettes extravagantly rich, jewels in profusion, rouged cheeks like show carnations, artful structures of simple curls delicately silvered over, picture fans, Paris-made flowers, all showed up against the yellows of the background in bright daring harmony. Behind the chairs of the women stood the men, and their costume continued on instead of relieving the effect of elaboration, variety, splendour.

Monton, the middle-aged poet, was as magnificent as any. He sat in the centre of the room, grasping his manuscript in one hand, while with the other he liberally helped out by means of gesticulation a voice which was thin and shrill. He was reciting or reading a poem not yet in print on the story of Cupid and Psyche. People listened with an air more or less successfully hit off of intelligent appreciation, for mind was the rage in society, and, besides, Monton had lately been taken up by a Royal Duchess. It was as the poem drew to a close that Gaspar and Letourneau arrived. They came in by a side-door. Letourneau, instead of joining the group of men at the back, placed himself with the Chevalier at the end of the feminine line, and in fact a little further forward than the women. Why? Because he simply was not thinking about the matter. For a moment all eyes were turned on the new-comers, on the odd rusty fidgety figure of the *curé*, on the Chevalier de Bessay, who comported himself like a statue.

There was no air of helplessness about him as he stood in the conspicuous position selected by Letourneau. His robust figure had the repose of power; his eyes were half closed, as if in self-concentration; the pose of the head, which was slightly thrown back, brought out strikingly the strong set of the mouth and jaw.

Lucinde de la Rose was seated at one end of the female half-

circle, near the door by which Gaspar had entered. Like one or two more of the very young persons present, she wore no rouge. Her face was pale, but the *mignon* features looked none the less attractive for that. The heiress had some fine pearls on her neck and arms; her dress was the plainest in the room. When the Chevalier de Bessay appeared, she turned and whispered an insignificant and random remark to the girl next her, who, as the best way of reproving the little Creole, pretended to be too much absorbed in the recitation to hear her.

The light whisper reached Gaspar. He no longer stood in a black blank, penetrated only by the voice of the declaimer. He knew now where Lucette was—close at hand.

Monton stopped. Both Gaspar and Letourneau were vaguely aware of a grateful quiet, but they had not heard a word. Gaspar had been listening for some fresh sound from Lucette's place. Letourneau was absorbed in trying to puzzle out a reason for the change in Gaspar. His gentle attempt to win a confidence having failed, he had respected what was evidently the young man's wish, and said no more about the anxiety which he had really felt with regard to his favourite for some days. It only came to a climax in the scene of this afternoon. What thing could it be, he asked himself, what concealed thing could have power to overwhelm in this sudden and subtle, yet unmistakable way his beloved pupil's accustomed serenity of spirit? What could it be? Letourneau pondered, nibbling the knuckle of the first finger of his right hand—a practice he always found indispensable while preparing his sermons. But suddenly he was woke up by a movement on the part of Gaspar.

Lucette's effort to talk having been checked by her neighbour, she sat, as if unable to keep quiet, pulling at a medallion which hung from her necklace. Such a trick was unlike her. Feverishly the little fingers worked and worked; small wonder that at last a link came unfastened and the medallion fell on the polished floor. Slight as was the sound it made, Gaspar heard, and, discerning the exact spot where the object had fallen as well as if he had seen, turned, stooped, and picked up the medallion.

'Thank you, M. le Chevalier,' said Lucette, with a lofty air, hardly appropriate from the girl to her future brother and familiar friend.

Gaspar made a step forward and placed the medallion in her hand. Letourneau was watching, lost in admiration of the blind lad's adroitness. As Gaspar's hand and Lucette's met there

sprang into the girl's pale face a quick deep blush; the pure young blood seemed to run and spread like wildfire; she held her head higher than before; she turned her eyes steadily towards the fluttering, chattering, congratulatory group which had pressed round Monton, but the rich red burned on in ruthless triumph; and before it faded and disappeared Nature's signal, extraordinary to say, had spoken straight out to Letourneau, of all people in the world; he could not for a moment mistake it.

No one else was looking at Lucette. The general attention was soon to be drawn towards her by Monton's next poem, entitled 'Une Rose de Martinique,' in allusion to the isle of Mdlle. de la Rose's birth; but just now the whole room was occupied with the poet himself. Only Letourneau saw. In a flash he remembered Lucette's frequent visits to the pavilion in the birch wood. She had found great favour with him, her ways were so sweet, her respectful curtsies were the prettiest he had ever seen, and she would run on with her merry talk in his presence, secure as a child. But he knew that the pretty creature, who seemed half fairy, half romp, and was really altogether woman, was Mdlle. de la Rose, one of the finest fortunes in France, and on the point of being affianced to the elder son of the Marquis de Bessay.

Poor Letourneau, prompted by affection, had desired to find out a secret. Here it was suddenly open before him, and he stood staring and moving his mouth about as if what he now desired above all things was to dislocate his jaw.

The next morning Gaspar, as he walked wearily to and fro in the pavilion *salon*, was surprised to hear the *curé's* hob-nailed shoes coming at their usual smart pace up the wood-path. He went to meet him.

'I am not ready,' he said. 'The Muse never comes near me so early as this.'

'No, no; never mind about that,' said Letourneau. 'I—but wait.'

They entered the pavilion.

'What is the matter?' said Gaspar.

'Nothing,' said Letourneau.

He sat down. So did Gaspar.

I only wished to have a little conversation with you,' said the *curé* very awkwardly.

'Ah!' cried Gaspar, feeling in his pocket, 'a cow has died in the village, or someone is ill. What am I to give?'

'No, no, no,' said Letourneau impatiently, 'nothing of the kind. What did you think of the reading yesterday?' he inquired, moderating his tone.

'Nonsense,' said Gaspar; 'what does all this mean? Let Monton go to the devil. You did not walk over here before midday to talk about *him*.'

Letourneau took out a coarse handkerchief, wiped the perspiration from his face, stooped down, carefully dusted his shoes, wiped his face again with the dustiest part of the handkerchief, and then, as he thrust the square of linen back into his pocket, he said, speaking, it seemed, more to himself than to Gaspar:

'I do not like politic marriages. When we say marriage we mean union. How can want of money on one side and ambition for a title on the other unite two persons? Only affection does that. These artificial arrangements dishonour the sacrament.'

'If you don't take care,' said Gaspar calmly, 'you will lose your cure. I am sure your sentiments are unorthodox. Worse still, well-brought-up people would say they are vulgar. Worst of all, I must confess they bore me.'

Yet his lip quivered.

Letourneau seemed to come out of a dream.

'Gaspar,' he said, leaning forward, 'it is not in my habits to look much at young ladies.'

'I suppose not,' said Gaspar, completely mystified.

Letourneau went on. 'There is a young lady—I have seen her often—here—in this room—I consider her a very good and charming young person—I mean *Mdlle. de la Rose*.'

Gaspar's face changed. He looked ill-pleased. He said nothing.

Letourneau stood up. 'I feel my lack of language,' he said.

'Perhaps, then,' said Gaspar with singular gravity, 'you had better say no more.'

'It is quite correct,' said Letourneau, still floundering, 'to charge me with inobservancy as a rule. Oh, the poor little thing,' he now burst out, full of resolution and feeling, 'the poor, innocent, good, little child—Gaspar, Gaspar, she loves you.'

Gaspar sprang up.

'Silence!' he cried. 'Are you mad?'

He was trembling violently.

'Go—leave me,' he said.

Letourneau kept his ground. He had quite got over his embarrassment and spoke firmly, though in a very low voice.

'I am in my sober senses,' he said. 'I have thought much as to whether it would become me to speak. But in the end, knowing what I know, I dared not keep silence. I should have felt as if I had a share in responsibility for the misery of two young hearts. Am I doing wrong? My intention is right. I have spoken, and it is not too late.'

'Ah, ah, I know—I know well enough what put this idea into your visionary head,' cried Gaspar, striking the table by which he stood with his shut fist as if he had a hand as hard as the wood. 'I'll tell you what I heard my mother say four days ago as I came through the ante-chamber, and she was sitting in her boudoir with—with Mdle. de la Rose. "*I want to thank you,*" said my mother, "*for all your kindness to my poor blind boy.*" Ah, it hurt, that did, but it did me good. The shock I got taught me what way I was beginning to wander. Beginning? Have pity on me, Heaven! The ridiculousness of it! Poor blind boy! And you take on yourself to put this frantic interpretation on the amiable attentions of a tender-hearted girl? Fie, Letourneau, fie! Wait a bit! Isn't it so? You have no right—no reason—she has not—nothing has been *said*?'

'Not a word, not half a word,' Letourneau replied. 'But I am sure of the fact.'

'You'll drive me to insult you. Sure—how sure? Speak, man, speak.'

Letourneau was in a strange confusion. He minded Gaspar's angry speeches no more than if they had been blows struck at him involuntarily by someone in spasms of pain. But how could he find words in which to render the impression he had received on the previous afternoon? That impression, so astounding, deep, delicate, and ineffaceable, how describe it?

A blush; he had noticed that the girl blushed.

The incident related in his bare rough style would bring Gaspar's sore mockery down on him in a worse storm than ever.

Lo, as he hesitated, it broke out again.

'Nothing!—nothing to say!' he exclaimed. 'A baseless suggestion! Go home, I advise you, and pray to be freed from this foolish meddling spirit—one so foreign to my friend as I have known him, so little like Letourneau. Yet! Yet! Do you suppose that if I thought what you say to be true I would let the family convenience stand in my way? Poor blind boy as I am, I would have my love if I fought all France for her. I

would so! If it were true that Lucette loved me! Lucette, Lucette!’

He dropped down on the chair again, leaned forward with his arms on the table, and burst into passionate weeping.

Then for the first time Letourneau saw Lucinde de la Rose, standing just inside the glass door. She had little Ernest De Puy with her, the four-year-old son of Gaspar’s married sister. The Marquise had sent Lucette to the Chevalier’s pavilion to say good-bye, and, having lost all her old courageous simplicity, she chose to bring the child. Open-eyed he stood, aware of something strange. Lucette signed to Letourneau to keep still. She crossed the room with hurried gliding steps, and Gaspar, sunk in his anguish, was as deaf as blind, until the girl dropped her soft arms upon his neck and leaned over him and kissed his forehead and whispered, while her heart beat louder than her words came, ‘It is true.’

The next moment she sprang away and took shelter, as it were, against the stained and tattered cassock of the *curé*. There had been something of inexpressible sacredness about that sweet caress, so freely, fearlessly given in the presence of a priest and a little child.

‘I am your wife or no man’s now, Gaspar,’ she said proudly. But Letourneau had to support her, or she would have fallen to the ground.

There was a great to-do. The extraordinary young barbarians who ventured to suggest that their unauthorised feelings should be considered important would have been laughed at no doubt, but that each of them had an idolising parent. As for De Valmény, Gaspar making a loyal confession to him, the Comte warmly espoused his brother’s cause. He had been prepared to oblige his family, but, as it chanced, by keeping his liberty a little longer he would oblige himself, and that was even more in his line. The Marquis de Bessay was furious. His wife represented to him that it would be easy to find another good alliance for the handsome and brilliantly placed soldier, while Lucette was for certain the only heiress in France who would fancy their youngest born. Clear gain. The Marquis began to soften. Not so De la Rose. He sulked at Combes, and forbade his daughter to leave the grounds. He would have forbidden the Chevalier’s mother to enter them, but she did not wait to ask permission.

‘What is all this?’ she briskly inquired. ‘True, she will not be Marquise. But you will still have for your grandchildren—

De Bessays. Isn't that rather better than having none at all? Don't you see how thin your daughter has grown? She says she will never do anything to displease you, so you feel safe; but if she dies sha'n't you be displeased? Suit yourself; only, when lovely little Lucette leaves your door for the churchyard instead of the church, never say you were not warned.'

Three days later Letourneau, coming into the pavilion *salon*, was met and warmly embraced by Gaspar.

'We are to be married—her father has yielded—he is content—we are to be married. Listen, my happiness makes me afraid!'

'No, no,' said the *curé*, the very shape of whose face seemed to alter, so wonderful was the broadness of his beaming smile. 'Thank God for it, my son, and go on.'

'How can I ever repay you?' said Gaspar thoughtfully. 'Alas! you are one of those people who want nothing. There is nothing I can do.'

'You are quite mistaken,' said Letourneau very eagerly. 'You threw everything to the winds while you were in suspense, and I abstained from making a remark; but now—now—promise me, Gaspar, that either before or after your marriage our translation from the Georgics shall be continued—completed.'

Gaspar smiled tenderly.

'I promise, my dear friend,' he said.

S. M. CREED.

## *Eliza's Commonplace-Book.*

THE following verses came into my hands from an unexpected quarter. A short time ago I found in my room a small note-book in which they were written in a hand which I did not recognise, nor could I suspect anyone in the house of being able to string together half a dozen lines in rhyme. There was, however, certain 'internal evidence' which prompted me to make inquiries in the kitchen, and, sure enough, Eliza acknowledged the ownership. She volunteered the information that it was poetry, and she had laid it aside while dusting the room. On my congratulating her upon her hitherto unknown powers, she hastily disclaimed the honour, modestly considering it a reflection on the value of the verses.

They were, she said, taught her by her mother, and she had written them down, fearing that with increasing years she might forget them entirely. Their origin is obscure. Eliza traces them back to her grandmother, who could neither read nor write, and who 'learnt' them to her daughter, who also was 'no scholar,' and so they were handed down in true traditional manner to Eliza.

It will, I think, be admitted that we are under an obligation to Eliza, for had she, like her grandmother and mother, been unable to write, they would certainly have been lost to literature.

They follow the good old pattern, always popular in the kitchen—the heroine, in most instances, of humble birth, but high-minded; often of exceptional beauty, and always at least 'pretty fair'; and with truly remarkable courage and self-reliance. At the time when these ballads were written it appears to have been customary for unprotected women to go armed to the teeth, and, moreover, to display an extraordinary readiness with firearms and other weapons. Certainly the dangers of the king's highway appear to have made it a necessity, and, except for the presence of mind shown by them, there would have been fewer 'happy

endings' to these verses. It should be said that they are copied word for word from Eliza's note-book, and certainly would gain nothing by pedantic corrections in the way of spelling and grammar.

Tis of a fair young damsel in London she did dwell,  
Of beauty and of splendour no tongue could excel,  
To her master and her mistress she had served seven years,  
And what follows after you quickly shall hear.

She put her box upon her head and ganged along,  
And the first as she met was a stout able man,  
He said, my pretty fair maid, where are you going this way,  
I will show you a nearer way across the country.

He took hold of her hand and he led her to a lane,  
He said, my pretty fair maid, I mean to tell you plain,  
Deliver up your money without any fear or strife,  
Or else I mean this day to take away your life.

Now the tears from her eyes like 2 fountains they did flow,  
Oh where shall I wander, or where shall I go.  
He put his hand in his pocket to pull out a knife,  
And this beautiful young damsel she took away his life.

She put her box upon her head and ganged along,  
The next as she met was a noble gentleman,  
He said, my pretty fair maid where are you going so late,  
And what was the noise I heard at yonder's gate.

That box upon your head to yourself it don't belong,  
To your master and your mistress you have done something  
wrong,  
To your master and your mistress you have done something ill,  
For not one moment from trembling you cannot stand still.

My box upon my head to myself it do belong,  
To my master and my mistress I have done nothing wrong,  
To my master and my mistress I have done nothing ill,  
But I fear within my own heart some man I have killed.

She took hold of his hand and she led him to the place  
Where the stout able man lay bleeding on his face,  
They searched him all over to see what he had got,  
He had three loaded pistols some powder and some shot,  
He had three loaded pistols some powder and some ball,  
A knife, and a whistle, more robbers for to call.

He put the whistle to his mouth and blew it loud and shrill,  
 When four stout able men came tripping o'er the hill,  
 This gentleman shot one of them and that right speedily,  
 And this beautiful young damsel she shot the other 3.

Now he said, my pretty fair maid, for what you have a-done,  
 Oh I will be your lawful bride and that before its long,  
 Oh I will be your lawful bride and that before its long,  
 For the taking of your own part, to the firing of a gun.

No explanation is given as to how he proposed to be her lawful bride, but Eliza takes no account of captious objections. It will be noticed that a sinister meaning attaches to the words 'stout able man,' which occur twice in this poem, and in both cases indicate villainy. One remembers how in the old pantomime the hirelings of the Wicked Uncle, advancing on the unsuspecting babes to carry out their design, before coming to blows, came quickly down the stage on tiptoe towards them. Perhaps the same suggestive gait is intended by the words 'tripping o'er the hill,' or perhaps they imply the nonchalance with which the four 'stout able men,' anticipating an easy capture, went to their doom. In any case it is a striking phrase.

The next poem is entitled:—

#### THE DARKEYED SAILOR.

Twass of a comely young lady fair,  
 That was walking out for to take the air,  
 She met a sailor all by the way,  
 And she paid attension  
 And she paid attension  
 To what he had to say.

Said William, lady why roam alone,  
 The night is coming and the day's near gone,  
 She said while tears from her eyes did flow,  
 Tis my darkeyed sailor  
 Tis my darkeyed sailor  
 That has gone far away.

Tis two long years since he left this land,  
 He took a gold ring from off my hand,  
 He broke the token, here's part with me,  
 And the other's rolling,  
 And the other's rolling  
 At the bottom of the sea.

Said William, drive him from off your mind,  
Some other sailor as good you'll find,  
Love turns aside and soon doth grow  
Like a winter's morning  
Like a winter's morning  
When the ground is covered with snow.

These words did Phoebe's fond heart inflamed,  
She said, on me you shall play no game,  
She drew a dagger and then did cry,  
For my darkeyed sailor  
For my darkeyed sailor  
A maid will live or die.

His coal black eyes and his curly hair,  
And pleasing tongue did my heart ensnare,  
Gentle he was, not a rake like you,  
To advise a maiden  
To advise a maiden  
To slight a jacket blue.

But still, said Phoebe, I'll ne'er disdain,  
A torney sailor I'd treat the same,  
To drink his health here's a piece of coin,  
But the darkeyed sailor  
But the darkeyed sailor  
Still claims this heart of mine.

Then half that ring did young William show,  
She seemed amazed midst joy and woe,  
Oh welcome William, I've lands and gold,  
For my darkeyed sailor  
For my darkeyed sailor  
So manful true and bold.

Then in a village down by the sea,  
They joined in wedlock, and well agree,  
Now all maids be true when your love's away,  
For a cloudy morning  
For a cloudy morning  
Brings forth a sunshine day.

Eliza's memory appears to have failed her here and there, but she rejected the possibility of any emendation in the rhymes—it was 'how mother told her.' Neither could she throw any light on the meaning of a 'torney sailor.' It was suggested that

this meant that although 'Phoebie' was not to be beguiled by any dark-eyed stranger, it was not to be thought that she would have treated a 'tawny sailor' any more kindly. After weighing it well in her mind, Eliza would not venture to attach an arbitrary meaning to any word in the classic collection.

The next poem relates the adventures of another valiant young woman:

*THE BANKS OF THE SWEET DUNDEE.*

Twas of a farmer's daughter, so beautiful I'm told,  
Her parents died and left her 500 pounds in gold.  
She lived with her Uncle, the cause of her woe,  
And you soon shall hear this maiden fair did prove his overthrow.

Her uncle had a ploughboy young Mary loved full well,  
And in her Uncle's garden their tales of love would tell,  
And there was a wealthy Esq're who oft came her to see,  
But still she loved her ploughboy on the banks of the sweet Dundee.

Twas on a summer's morning her uncle went straightway,  
He knocked at her bedroom door and unto her did say,  
Come rise my pretty maiden, a lady you shall be,  
For the Squire's awaiting for you on the banks of the sweet Dundee.

A fig for all your squires, your lords and dukes likewise,  
My William's hand appears to me like diamonds in mine eyes.  
Begone unruly female, you ne'er shall happy be,  
For I mean to banish William from the banks of the sweet Dundee.

Her uncle and the squire rode out one summer's day,  
Young William he's in favour, her uncle he did say,  
Indeed it's my intension to tie him to a tree,  
Or else to bribe with the forest gang on the banks of the sweet Dundee.

The pressgang came to William when he was all alone,  
He boldly fought for liberty, but there was 3 to one,  
The blood did flow in torrents, come kill me now, said he  
I'd rather die for Mary on the banks of the sweet Dundee.

The maid one day was walking lamenting for her love,  
She met the wealthy squire down in her uncle's grove.  
He put his arm around her, stand off base man, said she,  
You sent the only one I loved from the banks of the sweet Dundee.

He put his arm around her, and she was all alone,  
Two pistols and a sword she spied beneath his morning gown,  
Young Mary took the weapons, his sword he used so free,  
But she did fire, and shot the squire on the banks of the sweet  
Dundee.

Her uncle overheard the noise and hastened to the ground,  
Since you have killed the squire I'll give you your death-wound,  
Stand off then, cried young Mary, undaunted will I be,  
The dagger she drew, and her uncle she slew on the banks of the  
sweet Dundee.

The Dr. then was sent for, a man of noted skill,  
Also came his lawyer for him to make his will,  
He willed his gold to Mary who fought so manfully,  
And now she lives quite happy on the banks of the sweet Dundee.

Unfortunately the rest of the manuscript consists mainly of fragments, which are all that Eliza can remember of other soul-stirring ballads similar to those already given.

On the last page is, of course, 'Steal not this book,' &c., followed by a verse that has been considerably 'edited,' and of which Eliza is perhaps author :—

Just round the corner is a nice little shop,  
With the name of — painted on the top,  
You should see me on a Sunday if the weather it be fine,  
And leaning on my arm is the girl as I calls mine.

The name of the owner of the nice little shop seems to have first been written and afterwards taken out, leaving room for doubt as to Eliza's final choice of her 'lawful bride.'

Let us be thankful that she has recognised her duty in rescuing these thrilling ballads from oblivion.

GILBERT WHITEMAN.

## *The Beggar Maid.*

ALL on a golden morning the beggar maid did go  
 To gather branch and berry, the hazel-nut and sloe.  
 And as she went a-singing, a gipsy woman came  
 Beneath a bower of branches—a grey and withered dame.

‘Your fortune, pretty lady, I pray you stop and hear,  
 I tell of one who loves you, of child you will hold dear.  
 Cross you my palm with silver, for in your hand I see  
 That gold shall lie full often, so pity give to me.’

The beggar child made answer in laughter low and gay,  
 ‘Alack, you have mistaken, good mother, hie away;  
 I am no high-born lady, my fortune soon is told,  
 I wed some roaming fellow who hath nor land nor gold.

‘My son—if God should bless me—a-seeking too must go—  
 To gather branch and berry, the hazel-nut and sloe.’  
 Then spake the gipsy woman and took her brown young hand,  
 ‘Nay, you shall reign hereafter as queen of all the land.

‘For see—the splendid future—that whispers of a throne—  
 And here the happy heart-line that owns one love alone.’  
 ‘Good mother,’ said the maiden, ‘that love make true to be,  
 And I resign the kingdom—yet never owned by me.’

‘My daughter,’ said the gipsy, ‘he’ll clothe you all in white,  
 And set you for your riding a palfrey black as night;  
 Upon your hair so yellow, a jewelled crown shall shine,  
 And gold shall be your wine cup and ruby red your wine.’

‘My throne it is the mountain, my wine the running streams,  
 Such things as power and glory are only sweet in dreams;  
 Good mother,’ said the maiden, ‘I pray you let me go,  
 For I must gather brambles, the berry and the sloe.

'You meet me but with laughter, a beggar maid am I,  
Who hath no greater kingdom than bird that wings the sky;  
But like him I go singing who have no wealth to care:  
None comes her way to envy whose treasure house is bare.'

. . . . .  
And as she spake a horn blast came ringing through the wood,  
She raised her leafy burden—a timid moment stood.  
'Hush, 'tis the King Cophetua, a-hunting he doth go—  
And I must gather berries, the hazel-nut and sloe.'

DORA SIGERSON SHORTER.

## *A Friend of Nelson.*

BY HORACE G. HUTCHINSON.

### CHAPTER XII.

MY news set England in a flutter. After Copenhagen, when the Corsican threatened us with invasion, the threat was an empty one, without a chance of accomplishment. Now conditions had changed; he had a fleet at Rochefort and at Brest. If Villeneuve should make junction with these while Nelson was in the West Indies, he might quite well secure that day or two's command of the Channel which being granted him, it was his boast that he could put an army into England big enough to overrun us. The effect of hearing that the French fleet of the Mediterranean was at large was, in the words of Lord Minto, 'consternation in London.' Lord Barham, a first-class man in every way, had lately succeeded Lord Melville as First Lord of the Admiralty, and it was to him that I delivered my despatches. The Admiralty had been a long while without any news from Nelson, and he put a great many questions to me about the manœuvres off Toulon, the cruise to the Egyptian coast and back again, and so on. He asked me shrewdly about Lord Nelson's frame of mind at this time, so soon as he discovered that the great Admiral had graciously given me some share of his confidence; and I was forced to admit that he appeared to be labouring under great mental excitement. 'But that,' I added, 'is always his way when great events are in progress. It does not at all imply that he cannot apply to them all the force of his genius, and as the event grows more critical so his Lordship's mind seems to clear and cool, just contrary to the way with lesser men.'

When I withdrew, Lord Barham said to me kindly, 'Now, of course, in the public interest it is necessary that you should go

before a court-martial on the loss of your ship. On the other hand, in regard to this matter of the despatches arriving under broken seal, it can do no good that the public should know anything about that. We here are quite satisfied with your own account of the matter. It would raise no end of a talk and a dust if it were to get abroad. Perhaps it will be for the advantage of all concerned that it should not be publicly mentioned. We can rely on your discretion for that, no doubt—in your own interest, if for none other.’

I thanked his Lordship for this kind dealing with me; but at this point I am obliged to say that my gratitude to the authorities comes to a full-stop. The court-martial (well—I do not intend that this shall be made public, if ever, till after my death, and that will mean after the death of most of the members of that court, so I will set it down without reserve)—I consider the court treated me in a scurvy manner, looking, so far as I could comprehend their point of view, at the bare fact that I lost my ship when by ordinary precautions I might have saved her, and quite disregarding the exceptional conditions of the case, which made it right, as I thought and still think, that I should incur any risks for the sake of getting despatches of such importance delivered a few hours sooner. I had a certain satisfaction in the consciousness that I had done what I believed to be my duty, and with that I had perforce to be content; yet I felt myself a discredited, and in some sort a beaten, man, when I went down to my home at Withyham to visit my mother and sister, whom I had not seen for several years.

It is singular how little change time makes when it passes with few events to mark the hours. The yew-tree hedges in the old garden had, perhaps, grown a foot or so higher and more solidly sombre in their hue, but my mother’s dear face seemed changed by the months that had passed since last I saw it scarcely more than the old sundial which bore its motto in Latin, ‘I mark the hours only that are bright.’ I observed this to my mother, saying that I thought her own bright and contented nature resembled the sundial in this particular. She smiled, but then added, ‘We have had our sad hours too. We wrote to you of the death of poor Uncle Dorset.’

I had heard the news of this sad blow when I was in the Mediterranean, and how my aunt had taken the reins of management on behalf of his young Grace, at that time a boy of some eleven years or so. Poor young fellow! what a sad fate was his;

but at the present there was no foreboding of what would come. I went up to see my Aunt Dorset on the morning after my arrival, and found her in her weeds seated before a great escritoire at the window that looks out over the park, surely one of the most beautiful in England. She received me very graciously, and had a number of questions to put to me, as who had not at that time, when I had come charged with earliest news of the first importance? We were like mice during those weeks, playing while we might, knowing the cat to be at large, unbelled, and not knowing when it might please him to make a spring on us. But long before she had made an end of questioning me her woman's wit had discovered that my mind was far from easy—that I had a weight lying on it that constantly oppressed it, and at once, with her kindly sympathy, asked what the matter was.

'Well, matter enough,' I said; 'and yet no matter of importance, after all'; and then I told her about the way I had come ashore with the despatches, and how the ship was lost, and finally about the finding of the court-martial that had not actually, in so many words, said I was to blame, but had shown more clearly than enough by what it hinted and by what it did not say that it considered so. At all events, I concluded, I may make up my mind to this—that I am what our friend Reuben Elphick, who was my boatswain, calls an arrant failure, and that his Majesty will have no further need of me on board his ships to bait the Corsican.

At that all the good lady impolitely said at first was 'Fudge.' And perhaps it was the best thing that she could have said, for it aroused me to a conviction that this was an unworthy and an unmanly way of thinking and of acting—or of not acting, for that, no doubt, is the more proper way of putting it. The more proper way of acting would have been to take some action; and take it I would, only for the life of me I could not see how to act.

'What does your own conscience tell you about what you did?' she asked me presently, after sitting silent a minute or so in thought.

'If I had the job to do again, I should do it the same again,' I declared, almost more stoutly than I had yet ventured to make any such declaration, even to myself. I was beginning to pluck a courage from her good spirit.

'And what does your heart tell you Lord Nelson will say to what you did?' she asked then.

'Lord Nelson!' I cried. 'I know what he would say. He would say I was right by all fair means, and almost by foul, to see his despatches delivered at the earliest possible moment. His own orders almost said as much.'

'Then, with your own conscience and Lord Nelson on your side, cannot you snap your fingers at all court-martials in the world?'

'Ay,' I said, 'that is so; I can snap my fingers, and that is about all that I can do. My own conscience can give me no ship, neither can Lord Nelson himself while he is in the Gulf of Mexico or across the equator, or Heaven alone knows where.'

'That is true,' she said, 'that is true. It is true, and it is abominable. Let me see. What are we to do? Eh,' she went on, and ground her teeth in a kind of humorous fury, 'if only I were a man! What a thing it is to be a woman.'

I laughed at that, of course, and we began talking of other matters. And then, just as I was taking my leave, she said, 'I have made up my mind what you are to do. As you say, there is no help Lord Nelson can give you while he is cruising the high seas on the other side of the globe; so what you must do is this. You must go down to Brighton. It is there that the Prince of Wales always is now. You must get an introduction—it is easily managed, no great person was ever more accessible; you must make him your friend, and his interest is as good for you as Lord Nelson's own. It is the only way. Tell me, do you see another?'

I told her frankly I did not. There were only two men in England who could help me, I fully believed—Nelson and the Prince of Wales; and the one was not in England (so that is what they call an Irish bull of a statement); therefore there was only one left, and that one the Prince of Wales, to whom she commended me. I did not exactly know how the introduction was to be accomplished, but, as my Aunt Dorset truly said, never was great personage more accessible or more kindly, and I walked away over the park of Buckhurst with a much lighter heart than I had worn when I came. On my way home I met the wife of that beauty for whom I had no very kindly feeling in my mind, Reuben Elphick. The poor woman had been to my mother's, hearing I was come home, and then on to the big house to meet me if she could, so anxious was she to hear of her 'arrant

failure.' Of course, I did not peach about the poor fellow's shortcomings to his wife, and was only rather surprised that she had not heard from him nor seen anything of him; for we had been ashore a week or two now, the ship (so to speak of her, poor thing, that was no longer a ship, through my own act) had been paid off, and Reuben had had plenty of time to find his way to London and down again, or across by East Grinstead, as it should please him. There was a coach that ran from Lewes to East Grinstead, passing Wych Cross, just above where we caught the Frenchman, not more than five or six miles from Buckhurst itself. So it was something of a marvel that he was not come, and though I owed the rascal a grudge, I should have been sorry for any mischance befalling. Moreover, though he had committed as gross a sin as a seaman can do, being heinously drunk on duty, I yet could not truly say that I or the King's service had suffered by it, seeing that but for his drunkenness permitting the theft of the papers I should never have had the loan of the smuggler's horse, and certainly should not have reached London so early. So the truth is that the 'arrant failure' by his drunkenness did a good turn to every one of us, and to the nation—a moral to the tale on which I sincerely hope not too many seamen will think fit to act.

Of course I comforted the woman about her husband's absence as well as I could, assuring her I had left him safe ashore and in spirits (which was true in more than one sense); and as for why he had not come, he was no doubt employed for the King. I had, in truth, more than a doubt, but thought it no wrong to say what I said for her comfort. If the great court-martial brings up nothing worse than that on the sheet, I shall pass it better than the one they held on me in London.

'You be sure for certain he be not wounded?' the poor woman asked me for the tenth time.

'Not he,' I said, 'Mrs. Elphick, and the scar on his eye has healed up a picture. He's handsomer than ever he was, I do believe.'

'Oh, handsome is as handsome does, they do say, and I don't know as ever Reuben was altogether a man of feature. 'Tis not that I care about in a man particularly. But Reuben, he do have a way with him,' wiping her eye feelingly.

'He does indeed, Mrs. Elphick,' I assented. And then I heard that the troubles were still going on between the Lordship of the Manor—that is to say her Grace, acting for the young Duke—and

the commoners of the Forest of Ashdown, the people of the manor always struggling to prevent, or at least to regulate, the cutting of litter, and the commoners continuing to cut it in their despite. The real truth of the case was that neither side knew their rights, which could only be settled in a court of law, and not by hard words, that sometimes threatened to come to hard blows. Mrs. Elphick was quite of my opinion, and we parted the best of friends, and she, I think, quite as much at ease about her husband as I was.

My Aunt Dorset was not one of those to let the grass grow long under their feet for want of moving, and in the morning I received by her kindness several letters of introduction to her friends at Brighton, where, in the season, no one who was anybody in the social world could fail of having many a friend in the fashionable circle that made it their resort.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

I SUPPOSE there is no place in the world that has changed its aspect and its status as completely and rapidly as the town of Brighton. In my boyhood I had known it as the village of Brighthelmstone, just struggling out of its obscurity, thanks to the exertions of the never-sufficiently-to-be-execrated Dr. Russell (I speak, be it observed, only of my childish sentiments towards that worthy man), who discovered the merits of sea-bathing and imagined merits in the drinking of sea-water—a loathsome potion, encouraging an unmitigated thirst. He had a successor, Dr. Arositer, who modified the horrors of this salt-water drinking by permitting its mixture with milk. It was to imbibe this disgusting fluid that I was taken to Brighthelmstone, to be cured of some puerile affection of the glands, and it is striking evidence of the growth made by the watering-place in the meantime that, though I had first seen it with the magnifying eyes of childhood, it yet appeared to me, on my second visit in 1805, so immeasurably increased and smartened that I had difficulty in believing it to be really the same. Yet even this alteration and increase, great as it was, is but a little thing in comparison with the growth in the few years intervening between that date and the date of my present writing. In 1805 it was a place of some eighteen streets, of 8,000 or so inhabitants, and within its comparatively small

area was crowded more of the fashionable world, in the wake of his Royal Highness George of Wales, than I should suppose were ever before lodged so closely or so poorly. The Royal Pavilion had been built, since my last visit, just beyond the Castle Tavern and the ballroom, on the opposite side of the Steyne to Donaldson's Library, and here of course was good lodging as the heart of a Prince could desire. There were his Grace of Marlborough's house, Mrs. Fitzherbert's, and one or two more, including old Lady Anne Murray's, all of which looked out on the Steyne, and were fine, ample, and some of them magnificent buildings; but as for the rest of the fashionable world of Brighton, they had to put up with lodgings in which I am very certain they would not have housed footmen at home. Yet to be sure it did not matter, for one was in those lodgings not six hours out of the twenty-four, and of them all the while asleep. Coming as I did to Brighton in the height of the season, unknown and unannounced, I was fortunate enough in getting a fairly spacious dog-kennel in an area of Middle Street. The room—it was not in literal truth a canine apartment—was beneath the shop of an honest pastrycook named Hyde, a man as round as one of his own tarts, and a wonderful advertisement in his person of their health-giving and adipose-making qualities. He was ruddy, with an immense apron coming up to his chin, brimful of good nature, and a white cap on his head. My lodging was underground, with a window just a-level with the feet of the passers-by as they went along the foot-way. No matter, it was somewhere to lay my head, and one had to be thankful.

Then my good Aunt Dorset (though it was absurd speaking of a woman of her age as 'aunt') had given me a letter to the Vicomtesse d'Arcy, who lived along with the Lady Anne Murray in one of the houses facing the Steyne. The Vicomtesse was a wonderful old lady. At first I was more than a little afraid of her, for the brightness of her wit and of her rouge, and the beautiful soft whiteness of her hair. Exceedingly picturesque she was. She was a Scotch lady by birth, like the Lady Anne Murray herself, but had married the French Vicomte d'Arcy, who had had his head, or his estates, cut off (at all events he was dead and never mentioned, and something in the nature of a tragedy had been the end of him) at the hands of the French Terrorists, Jacobins, or whatever the name of the particular sect of rascals might be that was in power at the time. So she was more French than English or Scottish; and yet at the same time, though French

was the language she spoke by preference, she imported into it the accent of the Land of the Thistle, and when she spoke the English it was with a quaint mixture of the two accents, the original Scottish and engrafted French. But the bent of her mind, owing to her long residence in France, was French altogether, so that as Henry Beauclerk, who was our best wit, said, 'She thinks French and says it in Scotch'—a quaint medley. These two old ladies—the Vicomtesse, as I have described her, and Lady Anne Murray—were among the most curious figures in Brighton, that at this time was very fairly well supplied with quaint figures, for they were such zealous observers of the old manner that both went a-riding daily on pillion behind their grooms—that is to say, on a cushion set on the horse's back behind the saddle—although this style was already almost wholly discarded. But any that thought to have the laugh of either of them, on this or any other account, would for certain come off with the worst of the bargain, the sharpness of their wits making them as feared as their kindliness of heart made them beloved—a notable pair of old Scottish ladies.

There was one other visit of ceremony that I, in common with all newcomers, had to pay, and that was to Colonel Wade, at that time holding the despotic office of Master of Ceremonies at Brighton. It is an office that I believe is not yet extinct, but survives so far shorn of its dignity that it is exercised in much less despotic manner than in the consulship of the good old Colonel Wade. At that time it had its emoluments as well as its honours and its labours, for the custom was for each newcomer who wished an introduction to the fashionable society of the place to enter his name in Colonel Wade's book at the library, and therewith deposit a fee of one guinea. Thus franked you became the object of his almost paternal solicitude. He would find you partners at the balls, and introduce you to all whom he held it suitable for you to know. He had also the work of arranging all the festivities—their dates, details, and programme; in a word, it was an office that was no sinecure, that required infinite tact, and that fully merited the modest emoluments with which it was rewarded.

My diary tells me it was on May 29 that I landed in England. It was on the morning of July 8 that I set foot in Brighton, descending from the night coach that I had caught the previous evening at Forest Row, traversing yet again, in a manner far more peaceful and leisurely, the road that I had devoured so

hungrily as we came along it in pursuit of the Frenchman and the despatches. As we jolted and jogged under the stars of the pleasant summer night, the constant query ran through my mind, 'What had the smuggler done with his Frenchman prisoner? How had he disposed of him? Had he kept his promise to me that he would do him no harm? And in that case when, and in what manner, should I be able to convey to my good and friendly smuggler the message that he might let the Frenchman go at large?'

His last words I remembered well: 'Send message by Phœbe Hessel to the skipper of Darby's Cave.' That was easy saying; but it implied that all the world, or I at least, must know this Phœbe Hessel, and be able to lay hand on her at a moment's notice, whereas for the life of me I could not recollect that I had ever before heard the lady's name. For the present, however, it mattered nothing. Not a word was come from Nelson since the despatches that it had cost me so much to deliver, and until there was later news I was not minded that the Frenchman should go free, for, though the gist of the news was the world's property, there might well be private details known to the Frenchman that were better kept from the knowledge of his Government; and in any case I had given my word to Lord Barham that I would move no finger for the Frenchman's release until a later despatch was made public. When that should happen he left the matter in my own discretion.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

A FEW hours' rest in my dog-kennel was enough to restore a sailor after the rough weather of a night's passage on the Brighton coach. I paid my visits of ceremony and took a stroll after dinner on the Steyne, where I was introduced by Colonel Wade to a few of the promenaders. In the evening was a masquerade at the Castle Tavern rooms, which I proposed attending, and to that end arranged my toilet with a special care, in my inconvenient kennel, that delayed me somewhat later than I had intended, and as a consequence I found that the festivity (which, like all in Brighton at that day, began and ended at hours that would now be most unfashionably early) was well under way. The music was silent for the moment, and even as I entered the room, though

it was so entirely unfamiliar to me, it struck me that the assembly was pervaded by an air of excitement somewhat out of the common. The company was gathered in little groups. In no group was the conversation sustained or constant. A brief remark of statement or interrogation, a hurried answer, then a moment of silence again—that was the impression created in my mind as I entered the gaily-lit room. To my surprise, Colonel Wade left the group of which he formed part, so soon as he saw me advancing, and coming quickly across to me, said :

‘His Royal Highness particularly desires me to present you without a moment’s delay.’

I was peculiarly flattered, and no little surprised, by this testimony of his Royal Highness’s interest in me, whom I had believed to be entirely unknown to him. My Aunt Dorset had said of the Prince of Wales that he was kindly and accessible, but that scarcely could justify me in expecting him to make this unsolicited advance. My affairs seemed to be marching beyond all anticipation.

As I came, under the wing of the Master of the Ceremonies, across the room I heard one of the party say, ‘He will be able to tell us more about it than anyone’; and the next moment I was bowing before the Prince.

‘Exceedingly pleased to meet you, sir,’ his Royal Highness said kindly; ‘have you heard the news?’

‘I have heard nothing, sir,’ I said.

‘An express has just reached me from London with news that on June 19 the allied Spanish and French fleets were sighted cruising towards the Azores as if for the Bay of Biscay.’

‘This is grave news,’ I said. ‘Your Royal Highness’s express is of course perfectly trustworthy?’

‘Absolutely. The *Curieux* brought the tidings to Plymouth on the 7th. They were received in London at daybreak this morning and forwarded to me here.’

‘The *Curieux*,’ I exclaimed. ‘She was with Lord Nelson.’

‘Precisely,’ the Prince said. ‘She left Nelson at Antigua—on what date was it, Major Blomfield?’ he asked, turning to his equerry, who held the express. ‘Ah, yes, the 12th. He had then learnt that they were leaving the West Indies, and himself started in pursuit, believing them to be laying a course for the Straits of Gibraltar. The despatch boat came up with them a week later, stayed in company long enough to learn their course and their numbers, and then made all sail for Plymouth. Now,

sir,' said his Royal Highness, turning to me directly, 'what do you think of this news?'

'It appears to me very serious, sir,' I said. 'It means that the French have again escaped Lord Nelson without a battle, that they have slipped back on their tracks, that they are aiming to effect a junction with the ships in Ferrol and Rochefort, and should they succeed in that, with Lord Nelson still far to the southward, they may conceivably gain that command of the Channel which the Corsican says is all he wants to conquer England.'

'There will be work for you, then,' the Prince said gaily, addressing Colonel Berkeley, who had command of the Sea-Fencibles. 'Indeed, there will be work for all of us.'

'Is there no fear they'll make ould Oireland their landing-place?' asked a rakish-looking, devil-may-care fellow of the party, whom I learned to be my Lord Barrymore, a great crony of the Prince.

'Ay, ay, there's every fear,' I said, in the midst of the laugh that the fellow's manner of asking the question raised. 'There's every fear of them everywhere; there's no saying where they may be at us, if at all. The only thing is to have a fear everywhere and to be afraid nowhere.'

'Now, that's well said,' the Prince declared graciously. 'But what I most fear myself is that they may fall in with our sugar ships and homeward-bound convoys, in which case the India Company will be sheerly ruined and half the City of London will be bankrupt.'

'God forbid, sir,' I said, 'that such a calamity occur. I should esteem it a high favour if your Royal Highness would communicate any information at your disposal about the measures to be taken to meet this move of the fleets.'

'Why, I can tell you—yes,' he answered. 'Lord Barham advises me that he has sent orders to Sir John Calder to unite the blockading squadrons that he now has before Ferrol and Rochefort, and take a position a hundred miles to the west of Cape Finisterre. How does that strike you, sir, as a disposition of the forces?'

'It is hardly for me to criticise Lord Barham, sir,' I said. 'But since your Royal Highness does me the honour to ask me, I should say that it seems the most prudent plan under the circumstances, always provided that Lord Cornwallis, whom I believe to be off Brest, has enough for the protection of the Channel against

the fleets that Sir John Calder has been watching in Rochefort and Ferrol.'

'There are seventeen ships with Lord Cornwallis for the moment, to the best of my recollection,' the Prince said; and therewith this, the only important part of my first conversation with his Royal Highness, concluded. When I was free to leave the group that was about the Prince, I heard his Royal Highness remark to one of his intimates, 'He has a look of Nelson about his figure—is it not so?'—an observation that never failed to please me, as often as it was made, though I full well knew that, of all the great Admiral's merits, those of his personal appearance were perhaps the least.

The interview with the Prince had given me so much to think of that I was glad to be able to sit quietly as a spectator of the new dance that was just commencing. I had been greatly gratified and pleased at my reception by the Prince, as who would not be that had a favour to request of him? I felt myself most fortunate to have timed my coming so pat with the arrival of the news brought by the *Curieux*; but, in spite of my general preoccupation with my own affairs, they were the affairs of the nation, and our chances in the sea-fight now apparently imminent, that engrossed my thoughts for the time being as I sat on my bench and, with vacant eye, watched the gay and giddy mazes that the dancers threaded and the throng of beauty and of fashion. I was exceedingly pleased with the good sense and grasp of the situation that the Prince's conversation had shown, and, I must admit, a little surprised to discern them in one whose amours of the heart rather than any qualities of the head made greater noise in the land. Amiable I had expected to find him, but his interest in these affairs of moment, and perfect understanding of them, I did not look for.

Startled by the gravity of the tidings just received, many of the masquers had removed their dominoes. The mask was optional, for the masquerade at which all were compelled to mask themselves had before this been given trial in the Assembly Rooms at Brighton and found little of popular favour. My own domino, which I had carried in my hand on entering the room, I had now replaced, with a view to avoid all likelihood of interruption in my train of thought. Nevertheless I had so sat through the progress of one dance only when I was again approached by Colonel Wade.

'Upon my life, my dear sir,' he exclaimed as he came to me,

'you may justly regard yourself as the most favoured person in the whole world. Little need for me to seek to whom I shall present you. Within half an hour from the time of your entering the room you have first been solicited by royalty, and now it is youth, beauty and the highest nobility of France that demand an introduction.'

An amiable old ass as ever lived was the excellent Master of the Ceremonies, and I believe his long-winded flatteries and compliments, with the backing of a right good heart, assisted him no little to his universal popularity and success.

'Surely,' I said, laughing, as I rose to accompany him, 'such honours are enough to take a man's breath away. Lead me to this paragon of all the virtues of France.'

He seemed a little shocked by the levity of my tone, and as if to make amends for it exerted himself with even more than his usual grace and gallantry in the pointing of the toe and the clasp of hand upon the heart as he bowed in most obsequious fashion, presenting me to a tall masked lady by the name of Madame la Comtesse d'Estourville. I too bowed, as in duty bound, and wondered greatly to what hap I owed it that a lady of so high-sounding a name should seek acquaintance of such as I.

'This is not the first occasion of our meeting, sir,' the lady said. 'Still, as at that former meeting we had not the advantage of Colonel Wade's presence and all the forms of introduction, I therefore entreated him to perform the ceremony in proper manner.'

The voice, the perfect English with the slight foreign accent, were familiar to me in an instant. This was none other than that lady whom I had seen dragged like a drowned kitten from the water, subsequently masquerading with mantilla as a Spanish donna in the wonderful cave of Aladdin, or of Parson Darby, finally going off with my despatches in company with the Frenchman, whose release might even now be granted him, if only I knew the channel for communicating with him. I bowed with some little stiffness as my mind went back over all these scenes.

'I had heard,' I said, 'that Mademoi——; pardon me, I should say Madame la Comtesse, was gone to Brighton, and was not without hopes of a second meeting.'

'I am indebted to this gentleman,' she said, addressing Colonel Wade, 'for a great service—that is,' she added with a note of bitterness, 'if it be a service to save one's life.'

'Delighted, my dear Madame la Comtesse. Charmed to be the medium of introducing— Ah, pardon me,' he said, obviously engrossed, even as he spoke, with the thought of the next of his multifarious duties that came thronging upon him. 'You will permit my leaving you?' And with another bow, lower than before, he hurried away.

'It is a service, madame,' I said, 'as it seems to me, that you took a strange method of repaying.'

'Strange method, sir!' she echoed, in surprise, real or affected, at my words. Then, drawing herself up with great haughtiness, she added: 'Unfortunately I have not found means of repayment. If you will let me know if there is any way—that is if you feel that I am in your debt,' and I saw the hot colour tinge her neck and bosom as an index to the flush of anger or shame that I could fancy on her cheeks beneath the domino. At her words it was my own turn to feel hot.

'There could be no question of a debt between us, madame,' I said. 'But you may suppose that my sensations were not pleasant when I found that during the night spent in that cave I had been robbed of my despatches.'

'Robbed of your despatches!' she said, in a tone of surprise; but I could have judged its genuineness better had I been able to look below the mask. 'I knew nothing of that. M. de Marigny, whom, by the by, I have not seen since, hurried me off in the morning—would not even have you wakened to give you our thanks—and after all you had been through you slept sound. It was for that I requested you should be presented to me when I saw you here—you had your mask off as you talked with the Prince—to thank you. But now you talk to me about repayment. I do not understand—no,' she repeated with a petulant haughtiness, 'I do not understand.'

I was puzzled, perplexed. I stood before her with a feeling of confusion, even of humiliation. I had begun by taking the ground of the accuser. She had so turned the tables upon me, either by feminine cunning or genuine innocence, that I found myself now rather in the position of seeking excuses—a schoolboy before his dame.

'Is it possible,' I said, 'that you did not know? I found myself, when I awoke, alone. You were gone, you and your compatriot, with my despatches.'

'What!' she interrupted quickly. 'It was he—Henri de Marigny—that had stolen your despatches?'

‘It was your friend, madame, who came with you.’

‘My friend—yes,’ she said in an undecipherable tone. ‘And so—— But how do you know he had them? How was it proved?’

‘By the most conclusive means, madame. By catching him and taking them from him.’

‘And you thought—ah, yes, you thought——’ She laughed as she said it, but her tone grew hard and a little shrill and unpleasant to hear. ‘You thought I had helped him steal them—that I was his accomplice! Of course, I understand now. It was natural. But we must talk no longer here—already people are beginning to look and smile and remark it. I must see you—where? Did not I hear that you were a friend of the Vicomtesse d’Arcy? She is my good friend too—related a little, a long way off. Will you be there? To-morrow afternoon, say, at one o’clock—may I expect to see you? *Au revoir.*’

She lifted her domino a moment as she turned away, leaving me in the most singular confusion of sensations and ideas.

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## CHAPTER XV.

TOWARDS noon of the following day the sun came out brightly after a showery morning, and the promenaders, like snails after the rain, thronged upon the Steyne. As I leaned upon the rails, watching the company go past, unheeding me, I chanced now and again on scraps of conversation that promised to be of no little interest could I have followed their thread. This being impossible, I was thrown back on the burden of my own thoughts, when my ears were of a sudden caught by the phrase, ‘Young! My good sir—young, did you say? Deuce take me; but she’s as old as Phœbe Hessel.’

Several promenaders passed me at the moment, and as I hastily looked up I was not able to distinguish which of them was the speaker, and before I could hear more they had moved on. ‘Phœbe Hessel, that was the name.’

Ranging my eye over the now crowded Steyne, I soon had the fortune to espy him of whom I was in search, the Master of the Ceremonies, standing disengaged, as luck would have it, in the neighbourhood of Donaldson’s Library.

‘Can you tell me?’ I said, as soon as our formal salutations were exchanged—‘you know everybody in Brighton—can you

tell me if there is such a lady here, and known to you, as Miss, or Mrs., or Lady—for aught I know to the contrary—Phœbe Hessel?’

‘Phœbe Hessel?’ he repeated, and looked at me in much surprise. ‘Am I to take you seriously? Do you really wish for an introduction to Phœbe Hessel?’

‘Before all things in life at the moment,’ I said earnestly.

‘Well,’ said he, glancing at his watch with the air of a person of tremendous engagements, ‘yes, I have a minute or two to spare for you. Permit me, my dear sir,’ he added, linking his arm in mine and marching me off with him down the Steyne towards the sea. ‘Last evening,’ he said, as we went along, he with his hat perpetually in his hand, saluting those we passed—‘Last evening I had the honour of presenting to you, at their desire, two of the most distinguished people in Brighton. This noon I have the privilege, at your own request, of introducing you to the third. The Duke of Orleans,’ he said, naming a person to whom he lifted his hat. ‘Ah, and there is Lady<sup>1</sup> Jane Seymour, coming home from her drive on the Downs. His Grace of St. Albans,’ &c., &c. It was a liberal education in polite society to walk this couple of hundred yards or so with the Master of the Ceremonies. We were arrived on the sea front before I had time to put any further questions on the subject of this Phœbe Hessel that occupied my mind. Very shortly we turned into Marine Parade, by Old Steyne Street, at the corner whereof sate an old woman in a chair beside a basket of fruit, comfits, pincushions and other pretty trifles made from the shells gathered on the beach. Before this good dame my conductor came to a sudden anchor, and bowing with all his courtly grace, said: ‘Permit me, sir, the honour of presenting you to Mrs. Phœbe Hessel.’

For a moment I stood stock-still and dumfounded with surprise—why, I can hardly say. I had formed no distinct image of this Phœbe Hessel in my mind; yet assuredly she was a very different figure from any that my idle fancy had conjured up. Certainly it would have been contrary to all the probabilities had a lady of rank or position been the go-between of myself and the Skipper of Darby’s Cave; yet such was the atmosphere of romance in which, by the circumstances of my meeting him, he had been invested in my mind, that I think any such medium would have surprised

<sup>1</sup> It has been stated to me that there was no lady of this historic name in Brighton or elsewhere at that time. No matter; it is doubtless a trivial error in a name, with no bearing on the narrative.—H. G. H.

me less than this. However, it took me no long time to recover my wits and commence asking the old lady, who appeared of a great age, though of undiminished vigour, the price of her wares.

On a better inspection of her she appeared a singularly picturesque figure, clad in a brown serge dress, with faultlessly clean white apron, a black cloak with a hood, and a spotted red and white kerchief about her neck. On her head she wore an old-fashioned black bonnet over a white mob-cap. With the fine tact belonging to his office, the Master of the Ceremonies had withdrawn a few steps, and was pensively gazing over the bathing-machines out to sea.

The old lady struck me as a person of little blandishment, and it was with a gruff voice and manner, resembling that of a man rather than woman, that she told me the price of the various wares contained in her basket. But no sooner had I mentioned, after a cautious look round to assure myself that no loiterer was within hearing, my purpose in seeking an introduction than her bearing underwent a marvellous change.

'The Skipper of Darby's Cave? Ay, the good boy, the great boy. How can I serve your honour with him?'

'Merely by conveying him a brief note,' I said, 'or message.'

'Ay, a message,' she said; 'a message, dearie, rather than a note. He does not like the written words much. Neither do I; for the matter of that I cannot read them. But your message is safe with me, if it be not too long for my old wit.'

'So he assured me, Mrs. Hessel,' I said. 'It is, "Let the man go"; that is all. And as for the sender—he does not know my name—tell him it was "Nelson's friend" that sent it.'

In the course of our conversation I had told the smuggler that the great Admiral had admitted me to some small share of his friendship, and I am aware that the fact had not counted for little in the good aid he gave me.

'Ay, "Nelson's friend,"' she said, 'and, "Let the man go." I can remember so much. No fear, this night, sir, he shall have the message; that is, if he be at his usual haunts. The message that I shall send him will make good speed. Ask me no questions and I ask you none. "Let the man go"; that is enough.'

'That is enough, that is all I want to say to him. He will not fail to know its meaning.'

'The brave boy,' she said; 'he will not fail. I thank your honour kindly,' as I placed a piece in her hand. 'Your honour

is generous, and I will ask you to take your pick of my basket as a keepsake of old Phœbe Hessel.'

I chose a pretty trifle in shellwork, and left her to rejoin Colonel Wade, with many apologies for the minutes I had kept him waiting.

'By no means, sir,' said he. 'The sea—I love to gaze upon the sea. With what glorious sensations does it inspire the human bosom—when seen from the land, that is,' he added, with the apprehensions of a landsman. 'But now, alas! I am a slave to the world of artifice and fashion. The world of nature, that is my true delight, I can rarely study as I should wish.' So saying the good Colonel, as arrant a lover of the artificial and conventional as fashion ever made out of man, linked his arm again in mine and we took our way back towards the Steyne.

'Tell me,' I said as we went, 'who is this Phœbe Hessel? She seems a fine old child of nature—a fine strong face.'

'It is a remarkable history, sir. One of the most remarkable stories of the time—I may perhaps say the most remarkable. As I have told it not much less than one thousand and one times, I can tell it, perhaps, fluently, and even parrot-like, with scarce a knowledge of the sense of the words. This Phœbe Hessel was born at Stepney, in London, in the spring of 1713. She has therefore, you see, judging by her present state of health, some prospect of living to be a centenarian.' (As a matter of fact, I may now say that she died but a few years ago at the remarkable age of 108.) 'Her life of adventure commenced at the early age of fifteen (she being then, as she says, "a fine lass for her years") with her falling in love with one Samuel Golding, a private in the regiment famous under the name of Kirke's Lambs. In 1728 the regiment was ordered to the West Indies, whereupon the fair Phœbe, rather than be parted from her lover, doffed the petticoat, donned the breeches, and enlisted in the 5th Regiment of Foot, which also was at that time under orders to proceed to the West Indies under the command of General Pearce. She bore a good character in the regiment, not a soul suspecting her secret, and when the regiment came home she served with the Duke of Cumberland's army in the Low Countries, and received a wound from a bayonet in the sword-arm at the battle of Fontenoy. Still the secret of her sex remained her own; she will tell you, should it interest you to question her, that she dug a hole in the ground a gallon big and told her secret to the earth; for even a woman, as she says (and she has some scorn for her sex), will not want to tell a

secret to mortal soul if she have already confided it to the ground. Maybe it is so; and 'twere well if other ladies that we may know would practise the like precaution. To resume. Phœbe in the course of her further service was stationed with her lover at Gibraltar, where he fell sick; and he being invalided home, she told General Pearce's lady of her sex and history, who procured her her discharge and sent her home to England. The excellent woman nursed Golding through his illness and married him—better late, you perhaps will say, than never—when he came out of hospital. No matter, sir,' said the Master of the Ceremonies, striking his gold-topped cane emphatically on the ground, 'such faithfulness you will rarely find in woman, whether within or without the holy bond of wedlock.'

'A marvellous history indeed,' I answered him. 'I had fancied that her manner had in it something of a military abruptness and despatch. But tell me—that is not the end of Phœbe. We have left her Golding; she now appears by the name of Hessel.'

'Golding, sir, died after twenty years of married happiness, and the good Phœbe paid his memory the compliment of marrying after a brief widowhood a man named William Hessel, with whom she lived until his death, and for the last ten years or more has subsisted in the manner that you see now, save that for a while she had a donkey on which she used to trade about with fish and various wares to neighbouring villages. Now, as you see, she grows a trifle old, being in truth well over ninety years of age, and contents herself with sitting on sunny days to eke out her pension with such profit as she makes from the wares carried in her basket.'

'No wonder,' I said, 'that you—and another who spoke to me about her—should expect that I should know a personage so interesting. But you must let me keep you no longer. I owe you a thousand thanks. You have done me more service than you know. We enter again the world of fashion.'

'Alas, alas! my dear sir, the frivolities of the time! How much better and more peaceful the scene by ocean's waves! Ah, my lord, your humble servant.' And with that the good old hypocrite, hat in hand, was bowing to an aged bishop who mingled with much content in the throng of fashionables.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

THE time was now drawing near for my expected interview with the Comtesse d'Estourville, and I may confess to a flutter of some little excitement as I approached the house that the Vicomtesse d'Arcy occupied with Lady Anne Murray. I presume that some explanation had passed between the ladies before my arrival, for a few minutes after my entrance the old Scottish dame, with her name of a French vicomtesse, her snowy hair *à la Pompadour*, finely pencilled eyebrows and rouged cheeks, left the room on some wholly transparent pretext, and I remained with the Comtesse d'Estourville alone. No sooner were we by ourselves than she rose from her chair, crossed the room to where I stood beside the fireplace, and laying her hand on my arm in her agitation, asked quickly and tremulously :

'You say Henri—M. de Marigny—took your despatches—yes. You caught him and took them from him—yes. And what then? What did you do with him? He is not ——'

'Your friend, madame, is, I have every reason to think, in perfect safety.'

'She sank into a chair beside the table and sat with her face shaded by her hand for a full minute. I had an idea that she was offering a silent thanksgiving to Heaven for M. de Marigny's safety. She lifted her head, and there was no softness in her look as she asked, 'Is he in prison?'

I studied her for a moment and took a brief counsel with myself before I answered. This was now the fourth occasion of my meeting this beautiful young Frenchwoman, of a beauty that expressed character and interest far more attractive than mere faultlessness of face and figure. It was, however, the first time that I had seen her in other than some kind of masquerading habit. To-day she was clad in the simple white dress, low cut and high-waisted, that was the fashion, with a golden bandeau encircling her hair and a veil falling gracefully from it. It was a costume that set off her refined face marvellously well; and yet I hesitated. The young face was hard, almost to cruelty, and enigmatic in its hardness. Then, on a sudden impulse, obeying no reasoned train of thought, for I had every reason to mistrust her, I said: 'Yes, I will trust you. After all, why should I not tell you? Your friend has been detained. It was necessary he should be detained while he had secrets that the world was not to

know. He deceived me when he said he was for the Bourbons. We English are all for the Bourbons, for the House of Orleans, for the Monarchy, for anything provided it be hostile to the Corsican. What is the inference? That the man, be he French or English, who plots against England, who steals despatches of an English officer—that that man is no friend of the Bourbons, nor of the Orleanists, nor of any party in France save one—the party of the Corsican. Is that not clear?’

‘It is crystal clear, monsieur. It is clear as truth.’

At every sentence that I spoke, at every point that I had made, she nodded her head, eagerly approving, her eyes fixed upon my face, devouring my expression as I went on.

‘It is clear as truth itself,’ she said. ‘So he remains in prison?’

‘Only at noon to-day, madame, I have sent word he may be released.’

Again she let her face fall on her hand, and held it shaded a moment, so that I had no chance of reading what it expressed.

‘He will be free, then,’ she said presently. ‘In a few days he will be free.’

‘In a few days at latest he will be free,’ I answered.

Then she said, ‘There is war declared between France and England, is there not?’

‘Certainly, madame,’ I replied.

‘And is it the custom to let an enemy go free—more than an enemy—a robber, when you have taken him with the red hand?’

This was a business that passed my comprehension. It seemed as if she was chiding me now for having freed the man.

‘You see,’ I sought to explain, ‘it was like this. We caught him—we were two to one; it was no fight. Had it been fair fight there is no man I would sooner have given cold steel or cold lead than this friend of yours, if I may be forgiven saying so—you have won my candour. But in cold blood—no. I could not have it so. He was kept out of mischief till his opportunity for mischief had gone by. Now, with Lord Nelson’s latest despatches and the news brought by the *Curieux*, he can do no harm. He goes free.’

‘I see,’ she said, ‘I see. Pardon my asking, monsieur. We women, it is often said, we have no idea of that “honour,” of what it means to you men—that is, to some of you. You have taught me to have some idea. I thank you. Not yours the fault if you have given an unworthy object its advantage, monsieur,’

and she held out to me her slender white hand. 'We have met thrice, but not yet have we done that honest English ceremony of yours, "shaking hands." Will you now?'

But I, moved by some impulse with which my will or my reason had nothing at all to do, took the hand that she had reached to me and carried it to my lips, imprinting on it a kiss of deepest respect; at which she flushed slightly, and said, 'Fie, sir; that is not English. These are French customs.' Yet for a moment the lines of her proud young mouth relaxed as if she were not altogether offended; but in the next moment she had snatched her hand away and removed to the window, whither a great racket of cheering and laughter arose from the Steyne. For his Royal Highness was there, apparently in his wildest mood, that took him less often now, as they said, since his domestic troubles with his wife—troubles that were of his own making, be it in all justice said. He was there as the foremost spectator of a ridiculous race-meeting they had inaugurated impromptu on the Steyne: Lord Barrymore with a goose held by a string to its leg; Mr. Mellish with a capon similarly attached; two other gentlemen, one with a goat and another with a white rabbit, all tied by the leg. And they were racing with this motley stud, the wagers being who should first do a course marked out by the sticks of the spectators, and reach a handkerchief held by two men at the far end of the course made by the rows of people. They were for ever on the Steyne inaugurating races of this and of all possible descriptions: men racing with others on their back one running backwards against another running twice the distance forward, and even races of the fish-girls for a gipsy hat. There was nothing that seemed too boyish to amuse the royal mind of his Royal Highness, now a man above forty years of age, and with much sobering experience at the back of them, one would have thought.

All this horseplay the Comtesse gazed out upon from the window. Yet when she turned again to me there was a look of thought and trouble on her face, so that I knew she had not seen these things, nor been occupied with them.

'Do you not think,' she said, 'that you will live to regret that you let him go?'

'I do not know,' I answered, surprised. 'I hope not.'

'I hope not, too,' she said. 'I have a great deal to forgive you,' she added, 'in that you should have thought me capable of helping to steal your papers, but'—and there was a softer look on

her face than I had seen there yet—‘you have a great claim on my forgiveness. For one thing, it is only a little thing, you have saved my life. And you have done more for me that you do not know of. I hope you never will know. But the day may come when we may want each other’s help.’

‘You speak in riddles, madame,’ I said.

‘On the contrary,’ she replied, ‘I speak with the utmost frankness—with a frankness that is entirely English between a man and a woman. Good-bye. We will shake hands English fashion, if you please. Some day you may understand these riddles.’

‘I hope so,’ I said.

‘And I most earnestly hope not.’

‘Still another riddle!’ But to my smile, as I said it, she looked back with an answering smile, as if there was understanding between us even to the extent of not wishing to ask the meaning of the riddles. ‘There is one secret that I will ask you to keep with me, if you will be so good. Besides our Lords of the Admiralty and one other, there is no one except yourself who knows the story I have told you of the robbery of the despatches. Will you keep the secret?’

‘I will,’ she said. ‘I promise—as if I were the thief myself.’

Then we shook hands ‘English fashion,’ as she said, and I went away feeling as if, instead of a thief, I had found a friend.

Going down the Steyne among all the boisterous and boyish revelry I seemed to see no more of it than she had seen when she looked out, with thoughts far away, from the Lady Anne Murray’s window; for between me and the racers, the revellers and the promenaders, came ever the figure of this graceful and beautiful woman, with the veil hanging from the golden bandeau, to whom I felt the more attracted by shame for the wrong I had done her in suspecting her of so shameful a theft; and yet more, maybe, by the interest of the mystery which still hung about her relations with the Frenchman, the veritable thief, in whose company I had fished her out from the sea.

The following morning I paid a call upon Major Blomfield, in waiting on his Royal Highness, to consult with him the best means and time of seeking an audience of the Prince, wherein I might lay my case before him, and ask his gracious services in my aid with the Lords of the Admiralty.

‘Audience!’ said Blomfield, when I proffered my request. ‘His Royal Highness has no great love of audiences, especially

when he is down here at Brighton ; but I will go in and see how he is disposed. All depends on his humour.'

'Audience! Plague the fellow! Who is it?' were the first words I heard, not wholly promising, as I sat and examined the fine violin on which this Blomfield, a man of as curious mixtures in his tastes as ever man was, had been playing at my entry.

I did not distinguish the equerry's answer through the partly open door; but the next sentence, in the Prince's pleasant voice, sounded more favourable.

'Is it that friend of Lord Nelson's? Why, yes; what does he want of me? Let the fellow in now, and have done with him.'

It needs not to tell again the tale that is known. I recounted to the Prince, who received me very graciously and asked to know why I had craved audience, the circumstances of the running my ship aground in order to save time in the delivery of papers of such importance, and the little account that the finding of the court-martial had made of the exceptional conditions. I concluded by submitting that, in my view, their importance was sufficient to justify me in taking a grave risk.

'Deuce take me!' he declared; 'justified?—so, indeed, I should say. What do you say, Barrymore?' to Lord Barrymore, who was with him in the room.

'Justified, is it?' Lord Barrymore cried; 'I should say you were justified, sir. With his Royal Highness and me, and the rest of us here, all sitting with our tongues out, like a thirsty dog, for news of Nelson, and nothing coming! And the Admiralty Lords would have you hesitate to run a King's ship aground to bring it to us! Deuce take me if I ever heard such folly.'

The Prince laughed heartily. 'You see Lord Barrymore's a statesman,' he said; 'that's the kind of man the nation wants at the helm of the ship of State. But to be serious, sir—to me—I have a willing mind to help you in this matter. I have no love of interfering with my Lords of the Admiralty, and I scarcely know that they have great love of my interference. They lack taste sadly. But I will promise you, sir, that you shall have my good word for a ship when the occasion offers. More than that I cannot say. We want men who will take responsibility, and run a ship aground when the service needs it.'

'And more I could not ask, sir. I thank your Royal Highness'; and therewith I took my leave, feeling that my business, if not half done, was at least right well begun.

*(To be continued.)*

## *At the Sign of the Ship.*

THE County of Fife, or at least that part of it which contains the ancient and learned University of St. Andrews, is not apt to excite itself over matters literary. For weeks I have read vague hints, in the newspapers, about the institution of a British Academy, like *L'Académie Française*. British, one says, to please one's countrymen, but I do not know whether the Academy contains any of these, any kindly Scots, or whether it is exclusively English. The learned, where I dwell, seem, I do not say ignorant of, but profoundly indifferent to, the subject of these eager inquiries. What is the Academy, what is its object, who are the members, who elected them, have they an uniform, are they going to write a dictionary?

These are the questions nobody can answer,  
 These are the problems nobody can solve;  
 Only we know that Man is an advancer,  
 Only we know that the centuries evolve.

Nobody, here, can answer, but a friend suggests, in language very unacademic, that 'a lot of dismal Johnnies have elected themselves, and got in on the ground floor.' From such phrases I disassociate myself,—or is the word 'dissociate,' and can any of the Academy tell me? The only names of these Immortals which have reached me are those of Messrs. Skeat and Sweet.

\* . \*

On the other hand one reads the musical wails of gentlemen whose friends have *not* 'got in on the ground floor.' Where, Mr. Gosse asks, is Mr. Frederic Harrison? If philosophy and philology, and history are the topics on which the Academicians are to muse, why is he not among them? To myself it looks as if Politics must have exercised an unholy influence. Then *The Academy—and Literature* (which latter serial *The Academy* has

'swollered') asks, where are Mr. Hardy and Mr. Meredith? They *ought* to be Academicians. 'They have written the noblest words in the language on the subject of real love.' What, nobler words than those of Shakspeare, and Milton, and Thackeray, and Lovelace, and Spenser, and Tennyson, and Browning? I did not know it: I rather incline to doubt the fact, and to ask for a few samples of 'the noblest words in the language on the subject of real love.' 'Bosh, it is nothing.' No living man or woman has written nobler words on the subject of real love than the antiquated authors whose names I have cited, and plenty of others whom anyone can cite.

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The critic in *The Academy* seems to take it for granted that one function of the other Academy is to discuss 'real love.' Now I doubt not that Messrs. Skeat and Sweet have their own ideas on this delightful topic—though erudite they are human, they have lived and loved,—but then Love is not their special subject. Probably they too have poured forth their passions in glowing verse, but they have not given it to the throng. Still, they deserve to be heard, if our Academy is to discuss real love, say, with the French Academy. If only M. Renan were alive (he who wished to be a lady's prayer-book), the discussion would indeed be valuable. Dr. Janet, we know, thinks that Love is a kind of influenza; you never fall in love when you are really fit, he says. When the *savant* does fall in love, says Dr. Janet, he finds himself, over his books and MSS. murmuring 'Delphine,' or 'Amélie,' or whatever the object's name may be, and 'a spirit in his feet' has led him to the muddy pavement under her nocturnal window. Perhaps he shakes the shutters, like the young men in Horace, *que sçais-je?* This is really something like 'real love.' Dr. Janet's are 'noble words,' but is this 'pretty fever' analogous to influenza, or a catarrh? Does it strike us, like a draught in a room, only when we are out of condition? If the Academy is to make this theme, amorous pathology, a subject of special study, it cannot get on without lady members. Many women in our midst are daily writing noble words on the topic of real love. Is Socrates to be in, and is Diotima to be out of this Symposium? That would be grossly unfair, so I conclude that real love is not one of the themes which the Academy proposes to elucidate. And, if this be so, if the Academy cleaves to philosophy (the philosophy of love barred), to philology, and history, then

Mr. Hardy and Mr. Meredith are not professional writers in these grave matters : however erudite they may be, and probably are.

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I do not know whether Mr. W. H. Wilkins is an Academician, but the public may be safely recommended to read his *Caroline the Illustrious* (Longmans), the history of the wise, kind, clever and tolerant Queen who had an interview with Jeanie Deans, and the Duke of Argyll. The materials are not, all of them, exactly novel, though it is new to me that Dean Swift took to drink. But Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, laughing at Pope's declaration of love (if she really did), and the hunchback in the Rue Quincampoix, whose back was used as a desk, these things are tolerably familiar ; so is the circumstance that 'it was on the Porteous Riots that Sir Walter Scott wrote his celebrated novel, *The Heart of Midlothian*.' I did not know that Lady Suffolk had left the Court, and was not really with the Queen when she met Jeanie Deans, but doubtless Sir Walter knew, and did not care. If you read that scene in the novel, and then read the conversation between Lady Suffolk and the Queen which Mr. Wilkins prints from a manuscript (ii. 259-268), you might think that Scott had borrowed from the manuscript, which he probably never saw, just as you might think that Mr. Stevenson took James Mòr out of that hero's letters, which, certainly, he never beheld. How the Queen (in Mr. Wilkins's MS.) 'scores off' her rival ! 'For God's sake consider your character ! You leave me because the King will not be more particular to you than to others.' Caroline has her there ! As to the old, old stories : there is always a new generation to whom they are new, because they exist in old books. Mr. Wilkins's being a new book (and partly based on new materials) his anecdotes will be as fresh as roses to new readers ; in fact, as Aristotle remarks in his *Poetics*, the oldest anecdotes are new to most of the public.

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Mr. Wilkins's Queen would have been kind to men of letters, but Walpole would not stand it. No 'littery fellows' for Walpole or King George ! So Caroline could only give them livings in the Church, and she promoted Mr. Stephen Duck, the labourer-poet, ecclesiastically. Gay would not take Holy Orders like Duck, and at Duck the wits laughed, being envious, and out in the cold. I think Walpole, by closing the doors of place and pensions against writers, did the profession a good turn. Clever authors had taken to politics and pamphleteering, to journalism, in effect.

Men like Swift could practically blackmail the politicians. 'Give me a place with a pension, or I write pamphlets and ballads on the other side!' This was an unseemly state of things, and Walpole put a stop to it. Caroline also refused to be bullied, after his manner, by Swift, who was a bullying toady. What did a genius like the great Dean want with places and a Court? He could write *Gulliver* unaided by either. Literature was now, in England, divorced from Society, with rare exceptions. Authors were thrown on the public for their wages; no sinecures were given; no pensions. As to the divorce from Society, one knows not whether it was a good thing or a bad; whether or not poets and novelists would write better if they were fashionable, and were raffled for, like Gay, by duchesses. Dr. Johnson was a better author than Gay, though no duchesses raffled for Dr. Johnson. Perhaps if the literary profession were fashionable, that would only increase our little amiable rivalries.

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The same thing would occur if mere poets and novelists, critics and literary persons at large, were admitted to our new Academy. About a philologist, a scholar, an historian, perhaps a philosopher (though I doubt it), you know where you are. He really has written something learned about Old English inflections, or about *κεν*; he really has passed his life among charters and State Papers—or he has not. There is a definite test, as in physical science: a man is erudite, and fit to be an Academician, or he is not. We may call him a *γωνιοβόμβυξ*, a person who buzzes in a corner over particles and dates, as a Greek poet in Athenæus does. But this is an unworthy view, and implies that only popular work in letters is worth doing or noticing. The other kind of work is so unpopular, so ill-rewarded, that it deserves the recognition of the State (when it is good), and to make the scholar an Academician is very well: he deserves it, and I hope that he is to have a becoming uniform: nay, I would cry, 'Oh brave we!' (like Dr. Johnson over Dr. Beattie's pension) if he also got 500*l.* a year. The British public hath ever despised scholars, as Swift affected to despise Bentley. Recognition, official or even Royal recognition, will be good for the scholar, the dealer with Old English, and *κεν*, and parchments, charters, and dusty despatches. If our historians would deign to be interesting; I see no harm in that. But if they can't or won't, let them be made Academicians, and speak to foreign Academies in the gate.

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In France, of course, it is different. Their Academy recognises mere literature, as in Monsieur Anatole France, who, of course, is a scholar as well as a novelist and essayist, and so might get a seat even in our solemn Academy. To be amusing and entertaining is not, in France, a fatal objection. But literature of a readable kind, and understood of the people, is, after all, a matter of taste. You have no test, as in philology and history. Who is to decide in matters of taste? The public would cry out for the modern successors of Mr. Robert Montgomery and Mr. Martin Farquhar Tupper, who seems to have been a kind of understudy, or second choice, for Poet Laureate after Tennyson. This may seem odd, but it is true: I have read Mr. Tupper's poetic addresses to the great; they do not seem to have been unwelcome. At every academic election there would be a prodigious stir in the literary aquarium, all the minnows vastly excited. Candidates would drive round, in morning and evening dress, soliciting votes, as in France. Think of going to your pet literary aversion, the man whom you have frankly called a humbug, and asking for his vote! And, if you are an Academician, think of having to sit and be civil to the windy popular novelist, the advertising quack of letters, the confounded bepuffed young poetaster, the impudently ignorant critic, and all the rest of them. Nay, conceive being solicited for your vote and interest by a literary Earl, or an Archbishop! How could you snub the Church, how refuse the Earl, who may have excellent sport to offer? Then there are your personal friends. They may love you as a man and a sportsman, but may have the meanest opinion of you as an author; and, if it is you who already are an Immortal, you may hold similar views about them. You may want to vote for an unknown genius, or even for a person whom you detest as a man (because he has pitched into your books), but whom you respect as a scholar. Then you must refuse your friend, and so forth, and so forth.

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As to asking for votes, one would feel like Abernethy (I think it was he) who stood for a professorship in Edinburgh. He had to canvass a Bailie, who was a grocer. The Bailie had *une attitude digne*. 'You have come, young sir, in this creesis of your career, to ask for my vote for the Chair of Toxicockology?'

'No, sir,' said Abernethy, 'I have come to ask for a penny-worth of your figs. Put them up, and look smart about it.'

The tale is old enough to be new to many. Thus, taking one

thing with another, it seems well to have no Academy for mere writers for the public, poets, poor things, dramatists, novelists, essayists. If they are successful they get praise and pudding, and 'press clippings' (oh joy!) and paragraphs, and some are asked to dinner by the great, and some (to judge by their pictures of the great, in their novels) are not. But the scholar gets little praise, very little pudding, while for press clippings he cares not, and his digestion does not permit him to sit at rich men's feasts. The public never heard of him, and he deserves a hand, 'every fellow likes a hand.' So by all means make him an Academician, if there are not knighthoods enough to go round. Biblical critics, too, ought to be elected. We owe something to men who can tell us that Abraham was a Moon hero, and that the patriarch Joseph (eminent for his prudence, chastity, and address as a Minister of Finance) was the god Tammuz or Adonis. The public, the gross public, only grins and ejaculates 'Gallup'! but such services merit, if not a Bishopric (which Mr. Kensit might disapprove of), at least the laurel of the Academician.

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An engaging writer in *The Publishers' Circular* asks why we 'literally hunt to death' a poor devil who tries to earn a living by secretly selling 'indecent literature,' while 'most of the leading literary journals' praise the lady authors of two novels which he names. I never heard of one of them: I have read bits of a chapter in the other. It was not a nice chapter: it was voluptuous, but boring. Now I conceive that what distinguishes this and similar works from the books which are 'hunted down' is their dulness and their 'moral purpose.' To be sure the hunted-down books may be tedious also—I never saw them—but it is unlikely that they are tedious in seven hundred pages, or that they brandish a 'moral purpose.' The legal functionaries who watch over our morals probably cannot wade on to those daring passages which my brother critic reproves. They weary, and desist from the pursuit.

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It is women who write these 'daring' books, and it is women who read them. A man cannot read them, unless he is a long-haired ass who babbles of art and letters in the press. When lovely woman stoops to this kind of thing, she 'is neither to haud nor to bind,' as my countrymen say. Our sex, to parody

Mr. Thomas Jones, can never appreciate the grossness of the other, when the other—contrary to the nature of things—is gross. Mrs. Aphra Behn acquired quite a distinct and separate reputation for ‘daring virility’ of phrase and idea, in an age which certainly was not prudish. When once the fair do take their bonnets off, they are not content with *that*, they throw them over the wind-mills, as the French say. Men do not like this kind of thing. It not only disgusts but bores them. It is a particular kind of woman, usually earnest and very stupid, who enjoys these excesses. Clever women, nice women, good women, loathe them perhaps even more than men do. But there must be a great many earnest stupid women, a great many morbidly curious women, who take a delight in works which Lady Mary Wortley Montagu characterises in a passage very frank, concerning naturalists and the oyster. Mr. Fielding and Mr. Tobias Smollett, though free spoken, would not have relished some fictions that are praised and popular. These authors, especially Mr. Smollett, had little of shrinking delicacy, but they had a sense of humour. The ladies who write the kind of stuff now in question have none at all, and that is one reason why they ‘dare’ so greatly. They do not in the least guess how poor a figure they cut when they tell those stories; which, apart from their licentiousness, always have an element of absurdity. The worst that I ever saw was by a lady who clearly meant to ‘see’ her sisterhood, and ‘go one better.’ She went it with a vengeance, and with a will. But, somehow, nobody took any notice of her and her abominable nonsense. Who can tell why it failed? It was really very curious and disgusting, and seemed to have all the qualities necessary to secure a certain kind of popularity. I cannot even hint at the plot, as I do not particularly address the earnest, the dull, and the prurient. To be sure it did not exceed 250,000 words, or seven hundred pages. That was, probably, the reason why so remarkably dull and loathsome a performance failed to be highly recommended by the cultivated critics, and warmly welcomed by the sort of ladies whose polished conversation might make a casuist, or Mr. Bob Sawyer, nervous and uncomfortable. Our sex, if all this goes on, must provide itself with fans to blush behind. We must leave the ladies before the coffee and cigarettes begin to circulate. But, to secure success, it is not enough for the youngest or oldest lady to be ‘daring’ and ‘virile.’ Miss Austen really has been more successful, somehow, in the long run. Miss Austen, though far from immodest, had humour; humour

which these audacious modern ladies never possess. For a mere temporary (though lucrative) vogue, audacity may do much, but only if united with an owl-like gravity. Nobody would prosecute the possessor of these qualities. Plain people may steal a horse, we all know, while pretty people must not even be aware that a nag is grazing on the other side of the hedge. As long as you are not lively, you may safely and successfully publish anything.

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An increasing aversion to new poetry is a distinct and well-recognised symptom of old age. Of course this remark only applies to people who, when young, were ready and willing to give new poetry a chance. Most young people think *all* poetry 'such footle, you know,' and age does not alter their opinion. Perhaps I cannot yet be absolutely fossilised in regard to the Muses. Of Mr. Phillips's *Ulysses* I have only seen an extract in a review, but that fragment was in remarkably beautiful blank verse, and made me want to read the rest of the drama. The verse was luscious, and Homer is never luscious; an author who selects his plot from the *Odyssey* has to cope with a great rival, but we must make allowances for change of taste. *The Lotus Eaters*, the chief triumph of Tennyson, is what may be called a luscious expansion of four or five lines of the *Odyssey*. I wait in hope for *Ulysses*, but books, like the spring, 'come slowly up this way.'

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New verses which do not find me all of stone are Mr. Walter Ramal's *Songs of Childhood* (Longmans). The book is not exactly aimed at the nursery, though a few of the pieces, 'The Fly,' 'The Silver Penny,' 'Bunches of Grapes,' 'The Hare,' and several others, seem to me almost as likely to please even little children as the old favourites, the traditional nursery rhymes. Try 'The Buckle': it is like the vague reverie of our childhood long ago, when we possessed the secret that we have lost, and shall never find again, 'the key of the happy golden land.'

#### THE BUCKLE.

I had a silver buckle,  
I sewed it on my shoe,  
And 'neath a sprig of mistletoe  
I danced the evening through!

## AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIP.

I had a bunch of cowslips,  
 I hid 'em in a grot,  
 In case the elves should come by night  
 And me remember not.

I had a yellow riband,  
 I tied it in my hair,  
 That, walking in the garden,  
 The birds might see it there.

I had a secret laughter,  
 I laughed it near the wall :  
 Only the ivy and the wind  
 May tell of it at all.

'Reverie' is another favourite, and 'Lovelocks' and 'Tartary,' and, perhaps above all, 'The Three Beggars.' One would gladly quote them all. Mr. Ramal, with some technical defects, easily remedied, has what Charles Lamb calls 'a fairy way of writing.' It is less what he says than what his verse suggests that delights us. How does the verse suggest more than it says? By the mere circumstance that it really is poetry. Mr. Ramal has something of the secret of Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. This must sound like exaggeration: one can only say that the verses affect one thus. On another reader they may produce no such effect, he may be out of tune to their music, as I may be in no 'pre-established harmony' with the poetry that pleases *him*. One can only advise readers fond of poetry to give that of Mr. Ramal a chance.

ANDREW LANG.

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